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SERMONS

ON VARIOUS

MORAL AND RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS,

FOR

ALL THE SUNDAYS,

And some of the Principal

FESTIVALS OF THE YEAR.

BY THE REV. JAMES ARCHER.

THE SECOND EDITION.

VOL. I.

London:

PRINTED BY SAMPSON LOW,

No. 7, BERWICK STREET,

For E. BOOKER, No. 56, New Bond-Street.

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SERMONS

ON MARTIN

MORAL AND RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS

1867

ALL THE SUNDAYS

AND ONE OF THE FEASTS

FESTIVALS OF THE YEAR

BY THE RECTOR



LONDON

LONDON:

PRINTED BY STATIONER

No. 7, BARNARD STREET,

For M. BROWN, No. 6, New Road-Street.

1794

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PREFACE.

IF I could flatter myself that the following Discourses will be read with the same indulgence with which they have been listened to, I should send them abroad into the world with little anxiety for their success. That I am somewhat anxious about the reception which they will meet with, it were dissimulation to deny: but to wish to please, with a view to benefit mankind, is an honest ambition, which should not be restrained. As, when this work was undertaken, we had very few sermons in our language by writers of our own Communion; should this attempt be deemed inadequate to the supplying of that deficiency, I still shall not regret, that some of those

hours

hours which could be spared from the various occupations of a busy life, have been devoted to a liberal and useful pursuit: nor shall I have laboured unprofitably, if I but stimulate persons of greater abilities, and more enlarged experience, to improve and perfect what I have begun.

Whenever my subject has led me to an elucidation of the distinguishing tenets of our belief, it will be found that I have neither ridiculed; nor censured the religious opinions of other men. My views, in sometimes treating of speculative points, have ever been confined to the taking off from our doctrines that false colouring with which they have been disfigured and injured by ignorance, prejudice, or passion. For controversy I have no natural relish; but am desirous, at the same time, to unfold to the world coolly and ingenuously, the real tenets of the religion which I profess. Amongst every sect of Christians, the leading principles of Morality are nearly the same: these

these, therefore, principally I have endeavoured to inculcate. Confident that those who sincerely desire and seek to know the Divine will, and are careful to regulate their actions, and the affections of their hearts, by the wisdom which they have already received, cannot fail to be approved of by Heaven. I wish to see all men, however various their religious creed, mutually loving, cherishing, and assisting one another, and walking through the chequered paths of this mortal life in harmony and peace.

As I am not ambitious of any other merit in this undertaking, beside that of presenting the Public with a judicious compilation, I have employed the productions of other writers on moral subjects with the utmost freedom. The Fathers, particularly St. Chrysostom, have furnished many ideas. The plan, and some passages of the seventh Sermon in this volume, are taken from the beautiful and eloquent compositions of Doctor Blair. To Bourdaloue I am

debted for some solid reflections; and my obligations to Masillon will be readily perceived by those who have read the sermons of that most eloquent among Christian Orators.

Duke Street, Nov. 26, 1785.

A very great demand for these Sermons, since they have been out of print, has induced me to offer to the Public this second edition of them, in which some errors are corrected, and some alterations are made, tending, as I hope, to some small improvement.

J. ARCHER.

Golden-Square, May 1st, 1794.

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SERMON

SERMON I.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

On the General Judgement.

The powers of Heaven shall be moved; and then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with great power and majesty. Luke xxi. 26.

AWFUL and tremendous is the scene which is set before us in this gospel: a scene in which you and I, my brethren, each of us here assembled, must bear a part. The great day of final judgement, with the striking and dreadful circumstances by which it is attended, is described and painted to our imaginations: the day on which we shall all stand at the bar of divine justice, and there receive a definitive sentence: the day on which

this earthly dwelling, with all its comforts, its pomps and its splendours, and all its distresses too, its troubles and miseries, shall pass away ; when nothing shall remain of all we loved and coveted on earth, nothing but virtue to support us and give us consolation : the day on which the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and every conscience laid open to the inspection of the whole world ; on which Jesus will finally accomplish the great work of Redemption, and completely establish his dominion over the whole creation : to the just, a day of peace and consolation, joy and triumph ; to the sinner, the hour of calamity, bitterest anguish, and eternal despair.

The image of this last and formidable event, ever present to the minds of the servants of God, animated their courage to withstand the assaults of every temptation, and to subdue every obstacle in the way of virtue, that they might, on that day, secure to themselves a favourable

able issue. The thought of final judgement supported the martyrs in their torments and agonies, and inspired the tenderest virgins with heroic fortitude. This thought dispels, for the solitary, all the horrors of a desert: this thought has moved so many virtuous souls in every age, to fly from the contagion of that world, which shall then be judged and condemned; that they might guard their innocence, and lay up a treasure of virtue for their support in the trying scene.

You, my beloved Christians, you who are so little accustomed to think seriously on your eternal concerns, you cannot look forward without trembling on this awful and calamitous spectacle. When you hear it described to you, a secret horror chills your blood; you feel emotions in your breast too big for utterance. But, alas! this is your misfortune: fickle and inconstant, you have frequently cherished for a moment these salutary impressions; you have been troubled,

you have been terrified at the view of judgement ; but quickly after, some smiling image, some seducing charm of wordly vanity has engaged your attention, has banished your fears, and lulled you again into your former destructive tranquillity.

Oh, divine Saviour ! will that be the only effect of this exhortation also ? To terrify for a moment, and be quickly forgotten ; and therefore only serve to increase the guilt of those that listen to it ? Forbid it, merciful Lord ! Join with me, my brethren, in that prayer before the Throne of Grace ; and then give me so earnest an attention, while I endeavour to lay before you an imperfect sketch of that to which you yourselves must one day be witnesses, that the remembrance may never be blotted out from your minds, but may guide and govern you in all the conduct of your future lives.

I. At a time fixed and determined by the impenetrable decrees of divine wisdom,

dom, when that eternal Being who first called the world out of nothing, by his omnipotent word, will, by the same word, destroy all its order and beauty, and command it to return to its ancient chaos; men shall behold such unheard-of and terrible prodigies throughout the whole creation, that they shall wither away through fear and dreadful expectation. The sun shall withdraw his light; the stars fall from the firmament. Violent earthquakes shall convulse the globe to its very centre: even the powers of heaven shall tremble. The sea shall burst tempestuous over its accustomed limits, while the roaring and foaming of its raging billows shall strike terror and consternation into every heart. All shall be dread, confusion, and horror, when nature is struggling in the pangs of death. These prodigies shall be succeeded by an universal conflagration. *The heavens and the earth which are now, says St. Peter, are reserved unto fire against the day of judgement and perdition of the ungodly*

men.....The day of the Lord shall come... in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth, and the works that are in it, shall be burnt up.

(2. Pet. iii.) Men will behold the world all on fire around them, the heavens covered with thick darkness, and the earth overflowed with rivers of flaming sulphur. Then the monuments of human pride, the splendid palaces, the superb edifices, all the works which the vanity of men deemed immortal, shall perish together, shall be swallowed up in endless ruin.

Behold the term of all earthly greatness. See, you that are enamoured of riches and extensive possessions, of worldly distinctions, pomp and splendour, see how unsubstantial, how empty, how transitory is all the greatness and happiness of this world ! All that the heart of man can love upon earth ; whatever glitters in the eye of hope, or swells the bosom of ambition, will at once become
the

the fuel of devouring flames. How will the lovers of this world stand aghast in the midst of this accumulated destruction! Themselves naked, friendless, comfortless! Whither shall they look for consolation? what ray of hope remains? Alas! all that they built upon is gone; is sunk in ruin. Shall they cast their anxious thoughts towards a future world? More terrible still is the prospect on that side, than the evils with which they are now surrounded. The dissolution of nature forwarns them of the coming of their Judge. But they have nothing to present before him in their own favour: they have through life insulted his adorable majesty, despised his goodness, and abused all his benefits. Whither shall they run, wretched and lost creatures? They wish to be destroyed with the world; to be annihilated: they call to the mountains to fall upon them, and to the hills to cover them from before the face of his wrath—but in vain. They must meet the fury of his countenance, and be the

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lamentable

lamentable victims of his eternal indignation. — Oh! my beloved friends, in this hour of terrors, nothing but your virtues can support you. If you wish to stand secure and undismayed amidst the ruins of the universe, let virtue be all you covet here below. Virtue will never fail you. While all things else are destroyed around you, the good works you treasure up in this life will not be consumed; the fire which rages on every side, will give them greater lustre. Make God your friend; unite yourselves to him; cling fast to his protection in this life: and your Judge tells you to lift up your heads in triumph on that day: *because your redemption is at hand.*

II. At the command of the Judge, the Archangel shall sound the trumpet, which, with a clangour far more widely resounding than peals of loudest thunder, shall pierce the silent monuments of the dead, shall be heard in the depths of the sea, proclaiming the dread summons:
Arise

Arise, ye dead, and come to judgement. That instant, the graves and the tombs shall deliver up the bodies deposited in them; the sea shall give up her dead; and, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, all the children of Adam, from the first to the last, shall be clothed in their own flesh, and assembled together. All shall resume again their bodies, but with this difference: the bodies of the just shall be arrayed in beauty and splendour more glorious than that of the sun when it shines in meridian brightness; whereas the wicked, on that day, shall be united to bodies hideous and loathsome, expressive of the inward deformity and vileness of their criminal souls.

Think with what reluctance, with what anguish, the wicked will enter again into their bodies, the partners and the instruments of their guilt: not now to enjoy their former sensual delights; not to taste again their criminal pleasures; but to be judged for them, to be condemned for them, to reap the bitter fruits

of them for ever : when the very sight of their bodies shall remind them of all the enormities of which they were guilty in them : when they must appear before their Judge with all the marks and the instruments of their wickedness about them : with those members which they had made the servants of uncleanness ; those eyes which have so often sparkled with rage against their fellow creatures ; those hands stained with blood, or contaminated with rapine, robbery, and every species of injustice ; that tongue which they had made the instrument of blasphemies, lies, and perjuries, or the vehicle of detractions and calumnies. What will the drunkard, the impure, the voluptuary then feel, when those appetites, to which they had sacrificed their conscience, shall now prove their misery and their torture throughout eternity ? What will be the feelings of those among the softer sex, who, in their lifetime, have idolized the beauty of the body ; have made its ornament and de-

1

coration

coration the chief object of their attention and study ; have, by their criminal levity and vanity, endeavoured to enkindle the flames of impure love in the hearts of those who beheld them—what will be their feelings, when now their charms shall be all extinguished, their beauty blasted for ever, and they become objects of horror to themselves as well as to the whole assembly of men and angels !

When the wicked were upon earth, beholding the modesty, the simplicity, the humility, the disengagement from earthly attachments, and the love of retirement which appeared in the just ; beholding their countenances pale with fasting, their bodies subdued by austerities, or bearing the marks of an industrious attention to the honest labours of their calling; they laughed them to scorn: they called their conduct weakness, dullness, stupidity : the servants of God were the butt, against which every shaft of ridicule was constantly pointed. Ah !

but in the last day, the just shall stand with conscious firmness against those who have afflicted them, or derided their labours. Virtue, though here timid, cautious, and frequently compelled to hide her head, that she may avoid the insults and outrages of the world, shall then appear in all her native dignity, and confound her opposers. The wicked, *seeing it, shall be troubled with terrible fear.... saying within themselves, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit.... we fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold, how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the Saints!* (Wisd. v.)

Here, let us pause awhile, my friends. Did not sad experience evince the truth of it, could it be supposed possible, that a thinking being should rush deliberately into all this misery, for the enjoyment of a little ease and pleasure here on earth, which, at best, is of very short duration, and mingled with many sorrows; that a
man

man who uses his reflexion should expose himself to this everlasting ignominy, in order to avoid a little shame and confusion in this world? What a horrible situation! had virtue no charms in itself; were it attended by no pleasures—and truly it has charms, my brethren; it is surrounded by pleasures; in its absence nothing can give us real pleasure: yet—were virtue all gloom, anguish, sorrow, and painful slavery; who would not cheerfully embrace it for the short day of this mortal life, when its end is so glorious, its fruits so sweet, so delightful, in the never-ending day of eternity? Who would not cultivate the graces and beauties of the mind, which, in a future life, will be crowned with immortal glory, and reflect, even on the body, a lustre which shall never fade? Ah! the wicked will wish they had made this choice; but they will wish in vain. If you wish now, my brethren, it will not be in vain; the time of mercy has not yet expired. Run to your God without delay; embrace

brace his goodness ; lay your crimes at his feet ; lament them now with heart-felt compunction, and swear to him, from this moment, eternal allegiance.

III. The Judge takes his seat upon the clouds ; and methinks I see the holy and devout souls, in the highest raptures and extasies of joy, embracing and comforting one another at the appearance of their Lord.// Here comes the blessed Jesus ! it is he himself, they will say, the true image of God, the very splendour of his glory. Oh ! how unlike the Babe of Bethlehem ! how unlike the man of Sorrows, who expired on Mount Calvary ! This is the blessed day for which we have so long hoped : let us go forth and meet him with uplifted heads. He comes to judgement : but let those tremble at judgement who have violated his laws. We have been faithful to him ; we are his own : and now he is come to own us for his, in the presence of men and angels, and to receive us to himself, that where he is, we also may be.//

But

But can I attempt to describe the tumults, the distraction of the sinner's mind, the agonies that will tear his heart, when he shall see himself on the point of being condemned by him who died for the salvation of man? The very imagination of it, my beloved, amazes and confounds me. To be damned is dreadful indeed: but to be damned by the Saviour of the world—oh! there is the eternal sting! When Jesus shall show the wicked those hands and feet which were pierced for their salvation, that gaping wound from which issued forth a stream of grace to cleanse and purify their souls: I might have been saved, will the sinner cry out; I might easily have been saved. He that is now my judge, and so terrible a judge, once shed his blood for me: he purchased for me a place among those blessed souls, who are now to be exalted to never-ending glory in his kingdom. And now, wretch that I am! I must be condemned, accursed, by the Saviour of the world.

The

The rage, the fury, which will accompany these reflexions, is not to be expressed in any language. Oh! Lord of mercies, let none of us, that are here present, ever feel it.

IV. The Judge being now seated, and surrounded by his heavenly hosts, will command a separation to be made, which will at last, fully repair the disorder and confusion which now prevail in the world. Here the just, and the friends of God, are often despised and oppressed: frequently they are left to pine in indigence; they go sorrowing through life: while the wicked taste all its sweets; are raised in distinguished pre-eminence; revel in costly and luxurious pleasures; and only their favour, their notice and esteem, is valued and courted. All this, the providence of God permits to take place for wise and good ends. But now the scene shall be changed, and order re-established. God, by the ministry of his angels, will cause the good to be separated from the bad,
and

and place the one at his right hand, the other at his left. A distinction will thus be made, heretofore unexampled. To determine on which side you are to stand, my brethren, you will not be asked your name, your pedigree, your titles, your dignities, your profession, your employments. All this will then be of no consequence. Enquiry only will be made, whether you are innocent or criminal? The prince and the subject, the poor and the rich, the conqueror and the conquered, may stand together in equal honour. The distinctions of this world will then be accounted no distinctions. There shall be no difference, but that which virtue makes. The wheat shall be separated from the chaff; vessels of honour from vessels of ignominy; in a word, the good only from the wicked, on this day of just retribution.

A cruel separation, my brethren! The parent shall be torn from the tender embraces of his child; the friend from the bosom of his friend; husbands and wives,
brothers

brothers and relations, companions and intimates, the most endeared to each other, shall then be eternally separated: one shall be taken, the other shall be left: one exalted to the right hand in joy and triumph; the other ignominiously dragged to the left. The cruel hand of death, which snatches from us the dearest objects of our love and fondness, cannot take from us this consoling hope, at least, that one day we shall be again united to them. But here that hope is lost: the wicked shall no longer have either relation, parent, child, or friend.

Think how it will then affect you, to behold even the companion of your crimes, who sincerely made his peace with heaven, taken from your side, and raised to the right hand of the Judge; while you, who despised the warnings of heaven; you, who would not return to your God, or at least, would not think of it till the hour of your death, when he paid no regard to your sighs, tears, and

and protestations; are left to curse your folly with unavailing fury. Think how it will affect you to see your own children, the tender innocents whom you sent before you in their infant years, smiling in sweetest peace and conscious delight in the presence of the Judge, and rejoicing that death carried them early from the earth, where they would have been tainted and corrupted by your example; while you, the unhappy authors of their existence, are placed at an infinite distance from them and their happiness. That nothing may be wanting to the accumulation of misery on the reprobate, the happiness of each individual among the just, especially of those who were once their equals or inferiors, compared with their own wretchedness, will be an additional torture to their souls.

V. The books are then opened: on the one hand the book of the law and the gospel; on the other, the record of the life of each individual. These two
books

books will be compared, that you, and all the world, may be witnesses how far they have agreed together. All your past and future years will be laid open, clearly and distinctly, before you; the actions which have filled them up, the thoughts you have conceived, the words you have uttered, all with infallible truth and accuracy. Then will be displayed to view the follies and vices of your infant years, which you now no longer recollect; the impetuous follies, the boundless licentiousness of youth, when you perhaps gave full scope to every lawless inclination, and each succeeding hour was witness to a new crime; the ambition, the avarice of a more advanced age, in which this world and its cares and interests alone engrossed your attention; the depravity of an enfeebled and impotent old-age still recalling with delight the images of its former criminal pleasures. Oh! what will be your situation, should it then appear, that, in every stage of your journey through life,

life, you were still profane, dissolute, voluptuous ; without virtue, without good works, without repentance; in each change of circumstance or condition heaping up to yourselves a more abundant treasure of wrath?

Then that interior corruption of heart which the sinner dared not dive into in this world, dreading to behold his own deformity, shall be exposed, not to his own eyes only, but to the inspection of the universe. The crimes which he concealed at the tribunal of penance, in order to escape a momentary confusion, shall then be held up to the view of the whole world. Besides the evil you have done, my brethren, the good you have omitted to do shall be examined into ; the graces you have received in vain ; the inspirations with which you have been favoured by heaven, without corresponding with them on your part ; the exhortations to goodness which you have heard without fruit or amendment ; the sins of others likewise, which your example

ample has occasioned or encouraged. Ten thousand crimes may then rise to our view, of which we have now no conception; but with which, had we been in earnest in our examinations, we must have been acquainted. The sinner will then be so penetrated with a sense of his own baseness, ingratitude, and perfidy, that he will anticipate the sentence to be pronounced by his Judge; he will condemn himself, and seek for the lowest caverns of the bottomless abyss, that he may hide from his own eyes his horrible deformity. The whole world will also join in his condemnation, will feel and declare that his miseries are the just consequence of his crimes.

VI. The examination being over, and all the inhabitants of the earth standing in their separate places on the right or the left, while confusion, terror, and despair, rend the hearts of the reprobate; and joy, serenity, and peace, smile in the countenances of the elect; the King of glory will advance forward, and turning

ing to the right, with an air of inexpressible sweetness and tenderness, will say to the just : *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* (Mat. xxv.) Come, leave that land of sorrows in which you were strangers and pilgrims. Follow me, your Lord and your King, to glory and felicity. You have followed me in the rugged paths of mortification and penance, in the narrow ways of virtue and justice. The time of your labours was short : but I am rich in bounty, and your reward shall have no end.

Then turning to the left, he will say, not as he did on the cross, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do :* (Luke xxiii.) but with eyes flashing with indignation, and a voice which shall rend open the bottomless abyss, he will say to the reprobate : *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. Go; reap now the fruits of your iniquity.*
Your

Your pleasures were fleeting and vain; yet you preferred them to my friendship, and to the joys of my kingdom. // Therefore, hath hell enlarged her soul, and opened her mouth without any bounds; and the strong ones.... and the high and glorious ones, shall go down into it.... And Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgement, and the holy God shall be sanctified in justice. (Isa. v.) Topheth is prepared..... prepared by the King, deep and wide. The nourishment thereof is fire and much wood: and the breath of the Lord, as a torrent of brimstone, kindleth it. (Ch. xxx.) Then will the gates of hell be thrown open to receive the reprobate, and instantly shut in upon them for ever, while the heavens bend down to receive the just into glory. The wicked shall go into everlasting punishment: but the just into life everlasting. (Mat. xxv.)

Having thus set before you an imperfect sketch of the circumstances of this terrible judgement, I exhort you, my friends,

friends, filled, as you must now be, with the awful ideas which it impresses on the mind, to return home, seriously ruminating on the situation in which you will most probably be placed on that day of calamity and misery. Your destiny, which will then be unalterable, hangs now on the choice you make for yourselves. Life and death, a blessing and a curse, are now placed before you. To which are you actually giving the preference by the general ordering of your lives? If you were this moment summoned to the bar of divine Justice, on which hand of the Judge, do you think, you should most likely be placed? Oh! remember that, in general, men die as they live. You have the strongest reasons for believing, that your condition, at this moment, in the sight of God will determine your condition for ever. Hasten then, I beseech you, to quit the society of finners upon earth: no longer resemble them, from whom you wish to be eternally separated. Give no rest to your

souls; let not your eyes cease to weep, till you have made your peace with your injured Creator. Begin to live the life of the just. Unite yourselves now to Jesus, by obedience and love; and in the latter day, you shall smile and exult.

SERMON

SERMON II.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

On our Redemption through Christ.

I say that Christ Jesus was minister of the Circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers; but that the Gentiles are to glorify God for his mercy. Rom. xv. 8.

THE time approaches, when the Christian Church will celebrate, with joy and triumph, the temporal birth of Jesus, the eternal son of the most high God, the Redeemer of the world: an event, the greatest and most important that ever took place on the earth; an event which, for four thousand years was the object of the sighs and longing expectations of the Patriarchs, of the

c 2 Prophets,

Prophets, and of the just men in every region of the world; an event, in a word, to which all the dispensations of God's providence, whether in the order of nature or grace, whether to Jew or Gentile, were ultimately directed. If the Jews were God's chosen people, and in a special manner distinguished by his favours and consecrated to his service, it was so ordained that their law, their ceremonies, their sacrifices, should point out a Redeemer to come. *For the law hath a shadow of good things to come.* (Heb. x.) If the Gentiles were made illustrious by the cultivation of the sciences, by the refinement of arts, or extent of empire; all this was planned by divine Providence, in order to prepare the way for the coming of the Messias; to evince the necessity of his coming, from the failure of all the endeavours of the ancient Philosophers towards forming men to wisdom and virtue; and to glorify him by the triumphs of the gospel over every effort of human power, and
by

by establishing his dominion over all the nations of the earth.

Yes, my brethren, your Redeemer is *the end of every law*, as well as the source of every blessing. The religion of Jesus began with the world. Even in the earthly paradise, no sooner had the first man unhappily lost his original justice, but the Almighty was graciously pleased to administer consolation to his afflicted mind, by assuring him that there should be one born of a woman, who would crush the infernal serpent, and restore the inhabitants of the earth to their lost dignity and honour. Even then, from that moment, Jesus, the Son of Justice, began to shine upon the earth. He shone upon the Prophets, enabling them to penetrate into the dark recesses of futurity. He enlightened the minds of many among the Gentiles, that they might see the beauty of wisdom; and warmed their hearts to the love of virtue. At length, the time marked out by the decrees of the divine wisdom being arrived, he descended

ascended in his meridian splendour, and extended his enlivening influence to every part of the globe. He was minister of salvation to the Jews, fulfilling the *promises made to their fathers*; and to the Gentiles, to us who are here assembled, that in us the mercies of God might be glorified.

Behold then, my brethren, the beneficent designs of your Redeemer in descending on the earth. He desires to make you partakers of his graces; to enrich you with his treasures. He offers to each of us life, light, and strength; deliverance from every evil, redemption, and happiness everlasting. That you, therefore, may be excited to lay hold on the advantages he offers you, I mean this day, in the first place, to awaken in you a sense of the favour conferred on us in the incarnation of the Son of God, by inviting you to consider how wretched would be the condition of human nature, without the benefit of our redemption through Christ. Secondly, I will speak briefly

briefly of the most essential dispositions required on our part, for obtaining a title to the blessings which this redemption brings with it to the world.

I. The great Apostle, throughout the whole epistle to the Romans, and expressly in the words of my text, confounds the presumption both of the Jews and of the Gentiles, by teaching that the Gospel was preached, that Jesus Christ was announced to them, not on account of any merit or excellence, either in the one or the other; but to the Jews, in consequence of the gratuitous *promises made to their fathers*; to the Gentiles, that in them the Lord might shew forth the abundance of his mercies.

This doctrine of St. Paul, which is so mortifying to human pride, is grounded upon a principle laid down by the same Apostle; that we are all, *by nature, children of wrath: that by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin, death; and so death passed upon all men, descending from that one, in whom all have sinned.* Hence,

my brethren, it is a fundamental article of our faith, that the crime of our first parent, in the earthly paradise, was not confined in its guilt and in its effects to his own person only, but descends to every individual of his posterity : that all the children of Adam, without exception of nation or people, rank or condition, are born in sin.

Have you, my brethren, ever seriously considered, or thoroughly understood, what are the ideas conveyed by those words, *born in sin*? To be born in sin, is to be born in a state of perpetual banishment from our true home; the seat of all our comforts, possessions, and enjoyments : it is to be born in a state of separation from all that is great and good, lovely and desirable. God is the inexhaustible fountain of every perfection and every blessing : in him are beauty, majesty, wisdom, strength, and every excellent and endearing attribute: from him is derived all that the mind of man can admire, all that his heart can love.

love. Place together, in one point of view, all the beauties you have discovered in the whole variety of created beings; add to them, in thought, every excellence to which the powers of imagination can extend: all this falls far short of the perfections of the divine Being. All this, man has seen or can conceive: but *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man* been able to comprehend, the glorious attributes of the Most High. To be born in sin, is to come into this world at a distance from all that is good: it is consequently to be cast down into the last, the lowest, the deepest abyss of misery. Mention not poverty, sickness, infamy, or any of the train of human evils; these are but the privation of frail, uncertain, transitory enjoyments: but to be in the state of sin, is the complication of all these evils. Of these evils, did I say? Oh! my beloved, it is the complication of infinite evils, compared with which, these might well be accounted blessings.

Still, the misfortune of our birth, however lamentable, is not the only evil which demands our sighs and tears. Our original guilt is the first cause of all the actual crimes and enormities which are since committed on the earth; actual crimes, which, as they are consented to with deliberate resolution, in the full light of reason and religion, and in direct opposition to both, are far more heinous in themselves than our original guilt, and are followed by accumulated miseries. The streams that flow from that empoisoned fountain, are become yet more polluted than the source from which they are derived.

The first effect of original sin was discovered in the violence and ungovernable fury of the passions, which, impatient of all control, and breaking loose from every restraint, enslaved that reason which they were formed to obey. Hence, no sooner had man come out of the hands of his Creator, but he forgot his dependance on him; he paid no regard

to the admonitions of reason and the dictates of natural religion: he heard no longer the voice of his own conscience; he made Gods for himself: he adored the works of his own hands: he worshipped, as deities, men of the most infamous and abandoned morals, that, in idolizing their vices, he might find a sanction for his own brutal pleasures. He sometimes gave divine homage to the vilest insects that crawl upon the earth, and even to objects which decency would blush to mention. The light of reason seemed almost extinguished in every mind. The image of the divine Being, stamped in the beginning on the soul of man, was hardly any longer discernible. Scarce any trace, any feature, remained of his original beauty; and the few marks of his former dignity, which he yet carried about him, only served to make the wretchedness of his fallen and degraded condition more sensible and more insupportable.

The iniquity of mankind so much

abounded at an early period of the world, that the Almighty repented that he had formed them, and resolved, in his just indignation, to destroy, from off the face of the earth, the noblest work of his hands. It was reasonable to imagine, that the vengeance of God, manifested in so terrible a manner by the general deluge, would stop the progress of corruption, and bring men back to a sense of their duty. But no: when the earth was repeopled, the same disorders appeared again, and increased with time. Again the world became a theatre, on which every species of iniquity was continually exhibited. Examine the history of the nations of the earth from that period down to this age, and you will find it to be little else than a detail of the pride, the ambition, the impiety, and iniquity of man. Nay, look round you, my beloved, observe what passes in the world, and say, is it not so at this present moment; *The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,* are the idols
every

every where set up in opposition to the living God. Before these men bend the knee; to these they sacrifice their time, their abilities, their bodies and souls.

The world in general—

But why should we carry our view to any distance from ourselves? Ah! my friends, a melancholy idea here forces itself on my mind, and prevents me from pursuing this enquiry. I greatly fear, that, in order to become acquainted with the baneful consequences of original sin, and of that concupiscence which was its first unhappy offspring, it will not be necessary to examine into the lives and conduct of other men; we shall find in our own hearts proofs too evident of the tyranny of concupiscence, and of the miseries with which it is ever attended. Let each one in this assembly examine the secrets of his own breast; let the memory recall to your view, and let the imagination paint before you the years of your past life; think on them again and again, in the bitterness of your souls.

'Tis

'Tis most likely you will discover many crimes which no artifice can gloss over, no excuse can palliate; many bitter fruits of that concupiscence which brings forth death. Perhaps, from the dawn of reason to this very hour, your existence has been filled up by a continued series of transgressions constantly increasing: perhaps, each day, each hour, has been witness to some shameful vice.

Even the most just among men must candidly acknowledge that he finds in his soul a principle of corruption. He will confess, that he feels himself, as it were, pressed down to the earth, hurried on to the pursuit of only sensual gratifications; that he frequently pants after earthly enjoyments, as if they were the chief ingredients of true happiness; that he seeks to vilify his immortal soul, that soul which was formed to admire and love only infinite wisdom, truth, beauty, and perfection, by an appetite for sensual, base, and grovelling pleasures; that with regard to the advantages of this life,
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he is naturally warm and interested; but when the good things of eternity are in view, his understanding is obscured and confused, his will is enfeebled, a damp, a coldness and languor seizes his heart, and the yoke of Christ appears a heavy and painful burden. The testimony and experienced of the most distinguished among the servants of God proves, that they were not exempt from the effects of this natural corruption. *If, says St. John, if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us: (1 John i.)* And St. Paul thus feelingly exclaims: *I am delighted with the law of God according to the inward man: but I feel another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom. vii.)*

Such, so frail, so miserable is man, when supported only by his own strength, when guided only by the faint and glimmering

mering light of natural reason, in this his fallen state. Here, a restless, unsatisfied, vicious, wretched being; hereafter, involved in distresses lamentable beyond description. Such must have been your lot and mine, my friends, if the Orient from on high had not visited us; if he had not been mercifully pleased to *enlighten* us, when we sat in *darkness and in the shades of death*, and to *direct our feet in the way of peace*. Of ourselves, we can do nothing to atone for our sins. Our guilt is in some sense infinite, because the offence of a being of infinite Majesty; but all the satisfaction we are capable of making, must be finite, limited, inconsiderable: not all the endeavours, nor all the virtues, nor all the merits of men and angels, could atone for one of our crimes. Who then can assuage our sorrows? who can deliver us from eternal death? *The grace of God*, says St. Paul, *by Jesus Christ our Lord*. (Rom. vii.) For this purpose have I shewn you your own miseries; not that I might upbraid

upbraid you with them, but that I might engage you to run instantly to Jesus, *the lamb that taketh away the sins of the world*. Jesus, and only Jesus, is the minister of salvation to our souls; none but a God-man could expiate our iniquities. It was necessary that our Redeemer should be a man, that he might be capable of suffering, to satisfy divine Justice; and it was necessary he should be a God, to give a dignity and a value to his sufferings.— Truly, in this adorable mystery of the incarnation of the eternal Word of God, as the Royal Prophet foretold, *Mercy and truth have met each other; justice and peace have kissed.* (Psalm lxxiv.)

And behold now, my brethren, he comes to us; this Redeemer descends upon the earth with every grace and every blessing in his hands. Even when we are running from him, in eager pursuit of vanity and misery, he, with a love which shall be the astonishment of men and angels for all eternity, follows us, calls, intreats, and conjures us to come
to

to him, our sovereign and only good: he sees us defiled with the stains of many crimes, enslaved by vicious affections, torn by the violence of lawless passions; and he is ready to purify our polluted souls with his own precious blood: he comes, that we may exchange our weakness for his strength, our ignorance for his heavenly wisdom, our poverty for his riches: he comes not in thunder and lightning, not armed with terror and vengeance; but in the engaging form, and with the mild and placid aspect of a tender infant. Already, even in the first moment of his mortal life, his infant cheeks are bedewed with tears of compassion for our infirmities and distresses: he comes to us with every endearing quality of friend, of father, of brother, and eternal lover.

II. My brethren, now that I have thus shewn you what you are without the grace of Jesus, and what are the blessings which he wishes to impart to you, it surely cannot be necessary that I should
exhort

exhort you to go to meet him with due dispositions; or that I should even point out to you what those dispositions ought to be, as I in the beginning proposed to do. Your own hearts have already informed you, more forcibly than I can hope to do it, that these dispositions can be no other than a sincere repentance, and an ardent love. The reflexion on your own past ingratitude to Jesus, must have already melted your souls with the tenderest compunction: you feel that goodness so unbounded, so excessive on his part, demands from you a love that is stronger than death.

Can you—I speak now to those in this assembly, who, notwithstanding they profess to believe in Christ Jesus, are not yet in possession of the fruits of his redemption: I speak now to those who are conscious, that at this moment the state of their souls is such, as to place a wide and lamentable interval between them and Jesus; who know that their crimes, yet unrepented of, keep them

now

now under the tyranny of death and hell:—can you know your own distresses, and not seek to extricate yourselves from them? Have you lost all regard to your dearest interests? What! will you involve yourselves still more deeply in destruction? Merciful God forbid you should be so blind, so senseless! Oh! begin now to expiate your crimes by sincere repentance, and all your evils will be quickly removed. You cannot want motives for compunction, if you make but a serious examination into the condition of your interior. When you have your distresses and your guilt exposed to your view, your hearts must be pierced with penitential sorrow. The tear of contrition starts spontaneously from the eye, when the soul is conscious of its own miseries.

And can it be difficult to love? The heart of man was made to love that which is amiable. And what object more endearing, more charming, than the divine Jesus, with all his sweet attractions, and the

the abundant testimonies which he gives of the most generous, the most disinterested love for us? Indeed, if after having considered the mercies of this Redeemer, if there be in this assembly one so insensible, so obdurate, so ungrateful, as not to embrace Jesus with the warmest transports of affection, oh! it were better for that man if he had never been born.—

But no, my brethren; methinks I hear you cry out with St. Paul: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword?—I am sure, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. viii.)*

Meet your infant Saviour with these dispositions, and behold he is born for your resurrection: all the blessings he brings with him you make your own.

By

By the grace of Jesus, the sinner eased of the oppressive weight of his crimes, and restored to the embraces of his tender and loving father, will begin to taste a true and solid peace; the indolent and tepid Christian will run on with new vigour and alacrity in the ways of justice and sanctity: the just will be rapidly carried on from one degree of virtue to another, till he arrive at the summit of God's holy mountain. Your condition, my brethren, is enviable indeed! What a comfort it is to think, that, after all your misfortunes, you have it yet in your power to purchase happiness at so easy a rate, as that of repenting and loving!

Oh! to a penitent and loving heart, the birth of Jesus is a source of purest delight. As, when the vernal sun sheds his cheering light on the earth, after the cold and gloom of a dreary winter, the fields put on their verdant mantle; the trees are decked with a gay profusion of variegated blossoms; the air becomes serene and pure; and the birds, chirping their

their melodious notes, salute the returning season, which calls forth all the beauties of the creation: so when Jesus, the Sun of Justice, sheds the beneficent beams of his grace on the souls of men, after a long and dismal night of error and iniquity, then the clouds of ignorance are scattered abroad, and dissipated before him; the tumult of the passions subsides; the eye of the mind becomes pure and enlightened; the soul puts on the lovely ornaments of grace and virtue; the heart exults with rapturous joy, and sings, in concert with the celestial choirs, harmonious canticles to the praises of its Redeemer, its King, and its Lord.

Employ, therefore, this time of Advent in preparing for the birth of Jesus in your souls: prepare him an habitation in which he may delight to dwell, and of which he may for ever keep possession. Let it be the occupation of the days which precede the festival of his nativity, to purify the heart from all that is unclean, and adorn it with every pleasing

pleasing ornament of divine grace. Pray daily with the church: *let the heavens send down their dews from above, and let the clouds rain down the Just One: be the earth opened, and let it bud forth a Saviour.* Exert, O Lord, we beseech thee, exert thy power, and come; that, armed by thy strength, and secured under thy protection, we may escape every danger that surrounds us; and be at length numbered among the glorious trophies gained by thy blood, and treasured up in thy eternal kingdom.

SERMON

SERMON III.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

On deferring our Conversion.

I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness; make strait the way of the Lord.
John i. 23.

OUR Redeemer here declares to us, by the ministry of his Precursor, the necessity of preparing his ways. He admonishes us to remove whatever separates us from him, whatever is an obstacle to the effusion of his graces into our hearts, that nothing may prevent him from being spiritually born in our souls, and fixing there his abode for ever.— But what are the obstacles which must be removed? They are, my brethren, the crimes which have defiled our souls,

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and

and still rankle in our hearts until they are purged away by sincere repentance: they are our inordinate passions, by which we suffer our foolish hearts to be enslaved? which still hold dominion over our reason, because we have not yet earnestly laboured to bring them under due subjection; they are those occasions and incitements to sin, which are so many rocks, against which all our resolutions split; occasions, by which our innocence is so often seduced; because, instead of keeping at a cautious distance from them, we indulge that secret inclination, which draws us by degrees to a familiarity with them again. In a word, the only method of preparing for Jesus the way to our hearts, is to change our lives, to be sincerely converted from the evil of our ways.

But lamentable indeed, is the blindness of the children of men! Although our conversion from iniquity is the most weighty business with which we can be charged; although that alone can give
true

true peace to our souls; notwithstanding the happiness or misery of an eternity depends upon it, yet it is seldom considered as an urgent, pressing business, which must be instantly done. No; men are commonly easy, quiet, and indifferent about it: they put it off still to another time, as if they could certainly determine the duration of their existence on the earth; as if times and moments were at their own disposal.

Sinner, what can you promise yourself from thus delaying your conversion? What consequences can you expect to follow from such infatuation? Have not the Oracles of eternal truth given you a clear fore-knowledge of the miseries which impenitence will one day infallibly entail upon you? Have they not assured you, that *tribulation and anguish* is the portion of *every soul of man that worketh evil*? (Rom. ii.) Has not Jesus repeatedly warned you, that he will come at an hour when the sinner least expects him; and suddenly remove the wicked

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from

from the midst of his criminal pursuits and shameful pleasures, to that awful tribunal where judgment is dispensed without mercy? You know that he has, and you profess that you believe these terrible menaces will in general be put in execution. What right then can you have to suppose that any exception will be made in your favour? on what ground do you build your expectations, that you shall not be thus miserably surprised? Still with no prospect before you but endless perdition, you take no decided part in order to escape the impending ruin; still you delay, and seek for various excuses to justify your delay.

You allege, that you have not yet received that powerful grace which works a change of heart; or else you pretend, that at present your passions are too violent, or your engagements too distracting, and your connections with the world too binding to suffer you to think of entering on a new manner of life. I will examine these excuses, one by one; and

and that you may be no longer thus miserably deluded, and lulled into a destructive repose, even in the mouth of death and hell; I will demonstrate them to be empty and absurd in the extreme. The merits of the first excuse we will consider this day, and reserve the other two for the subjects of our enquiry on the following Sunday. I only make to the sinner this one request; it is, that he will not obstinately shut his eyes against the light of truth. That granted, I engage it will be impossible for him to continue in his criminal state, without daring to do what the most abandoned cannot think on without trembling; that is, deliberately to brave the vengeance of heaven, and rush with desperate fury into the bottomless abyfs.

I will suppose therefore your first excuse to be, that you have not yet been favoured by heaven with sufficient grace to raise you from the state of sin. This excuse is very often in the mouth of the impenitent sinner. You say that you

wait for grace from heaven ; that a conversion is not the work of man, but that only God can change the interior dispositions of the soul ; that vicious attachments, which both nature and habit have much contributed to strengthen in your heart, cannot be broken without a very powerful aid from that Almighty Being, in whose hand is the heart of man, and who alone can turn his affections whithersoever he pleases.

It is true, my brethren ; without the grace of God we cannot take one step towards our conversion, or in fact do any one thing which can give us a title to salvation. God is the source of all wisdom and truth, and the fountain of every good. From him therefore must descend that light in which the prodigal discovers the wretchedness of his condition, and that strength, which enables him to return to the house of his father in search of comfort and relief. But when you plead the want of grace as your excuse, do you imagine that the
 grace

grace of God is to change your hearts, without requiring any endeavours on your part; that you have nothing to do but to let him act in your interior, and need be at no pains yourselves to work out your salvation?

Christians, the Almighty Ruler of the Universe co-operates with all his creatures according to their respective condition and natural exigencies. The inanimate parts of the creation, those which are endowed with no inherent active power, he moves and impels by determinate laws according to his pleasure; but man, the noblest work of his hands in the visible creation, he has made a free agent: he has given him liberty, a self-determining principle; and he will have that faculty exercised in correspondence with the exertions of his own goodness. He wills, therefore, that all men be saved; but he will have that salvation to be the effect of his grace and our endeavours: he will have our salvation to proceed from him, as the first cause of all that is good;

good; and from us as secondary causes, acting with entire freedom from every coercive power. He is the giver of all good gifts; but his gifts profit not those who make no effort of their own to receive them, and make them fructify. In providing for the supply of our natural wants in this mortal-life, notwithstanding he hath made the earth abundantly productive of all things necessary for our existence, and comfortable to our being; and causes the sun to shine, and sends down the rain from the clouds to nourish the fruits of the earth, and bring them to maturity; yet he will have the labour of the husbandman bear a considerable part in tilling the land, and otherwise co-operating with the natural causes which he hath ordained. In like manner, in providing for the wants of our immortal part, though he hath made the soul capable of being fruitful in virtue and goodness, causes his divine light to shine on the mind, and warm the affections of the heart, and continually sends down
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the dews of his divine graces: still we shall bring forth no good fruit on which our souls may subsist in immortality, unless these exertions of his mercy and love be seconded by our own endeavours.

To make yourselves easy therefore in a criminal state, and to justify the delaying of your conversion, by alledging that you have no grace, while you make no serious efforts to subdue your passions, is a degree of folly almost inconceivable. To make such an excuse, is the same thing as to say, that all you have to do is to pass your time as pleasantly and agreeably as you can, by indulging every unlawful appetite; that you are to wait for the grace of a sincere conversion, and in the mean time prepare for it no other way than by multiplying your crimes; that you are to merit that special grace of sincere repentance by insulting the Author of it. In a word, to bring this excuse, is the same thing as to say, that your salvation, that grand affair, the only concern you should have on

earth, is no affair of yours; that Almighty God, who made you for no other end but that you might save your souls, who has commanded you to neglect every other object when put in competition with the important business of salvation, has freed you from any farther obligation on that head, and taken the charge of it entirely on himself, A more glaring absurdity never yet entered the human mind.

But you say: Did the Almighty now efficaciously touch my heart, I should begin to have a loathing for vice, and be captivated by the beauty of virtue; it would then be easy for me to run to its embraces: at present I have no such dispositions, no taste, no relish for any objects but such as gratify my earthly desires. Oh! were those good affections to arise in my heart, I could become a servant of God: as it is, I am distressed at the very idea of setting about the work of reformation. Christian brother, begin at least seriously to wish for such dis-

positions in your soul; beg earnestly of the Father of Mercies to soften your obdurate heart; desist a while from your iniquitous pursuits; raise your thoughts from earth to heaven; carry your views forward into eternity; form an estimate of its goods and evils, by comparing them with those which pass with time: this do, before you complain that grace is wanting. While you allow yourself no moments of serious reflection, in which you may view the misery of your present condition; while you suffer yourselves to be carried away by every lawless passion; can you expect any tender feelings, any languishing desires, any longing after objects to which your mind gives not any attention? Is it possible in such a state you should taste the sweetness, or be drawn by the chaste attractions of virtue? Just as reasonable would that man be, who after feeding on gall or wormwood, should complain and murmur that every thing tasted bitter. Oh sinner, you degrade and vilify all your affec-

tions; you blunt the finest feelings of your hearts by unworthy excesses.—Instead of endeavouring to expand those virtuous and noble sentiments which the Creator enkindled in your hearts, you do all that is in your power to extinguish them; you efface those impressions of innocence which were born with you, and then complain that the Lord has not given you a taste and love for his service! Is not this the basest ingratitude and injustice?

An injustice the more unpardonable, because the sacred writings abound, in almost every page, with express testimonies of the love which God bears to his creatures, and his readiness to go before their wishes in imparting to them every grace they can stand in need of for working out their salvation. *As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of a sinner; but that he may be converted from his ways, and may live.—O why will you die, O house of Israel? (Exek. xxxiii.) I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my*
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hands

hands, and none would regard. (Prov. i.)

Ah, my friends, the Lord hath called you; but amidst the tumult and distractions of the world, and its business or pleasures, you would not listen to his voice: he hath touched your heart, but the impetuosity of your passions did not suffer you to yield to the impression. It is not grace that is wanting, but your faithful correspondence with it. You receive it into a heart so filled with corruption, that it produces no effect, calls forth no emotion: it is like the spark of fire which falls on a heap of dirt and filth, and is extinguished the very moment it falls.

Pause a while; and recal now to mind the mercies which God hath shewn you, and make a grateful acknowledgement of them. Do you complain that God hath not done sufficient for you? Have you to wait for his grace in order to be converted? Oh! is there one sinner upon earth, in whose mouth this complaint is more unjust than it is in yours? Run
over

over the whole course of your life, from your infant years to this moment. The Lord had showered down his blessings upon you, and every where around you, in your tenderest age, before you had the use of your reason, or any power to ask for them. In the gifts of nature he was liberal to you: he bestowed on you a mind formed for truth, naturally attached to rectitude and justice: he gave you every inclination favourable to virtue. To these presents he added the gift of divine faith. He imparted to you the wisdom of the Gospel, the revelations which he has been graciously pleased to make of his truths, and of his will to mankind; by which life and immortality are brought to light. In your early youth he taught you his law, and traced out before you the path which leads to happiness: he set before you examples of virtue, in the lives and conduct of his saints, whose memories you were taught to honour: he has placed in your view living examples of piety and goodness in
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the circle of your acquaintance, perhaps even within the compass of your own family.

The mercies of God have extended still further. He hath preserved you from a thousand dangers: he hath made you survive accidents in which you have seen others, and perhaps the accomplices of your crimes, perish before your eyes. When you strayed from him, he made use of afflictions, sufferings, and misfortunes, to bring you back: he hath torn from your embraces the criminal objects of your passions, at the time when your deluded heart was the most strongly attached to them: he hath been so attentive to your true interests, that he always caused your unlawful desires to be thwarted by many obstacles to the attainment of their object: you have never yet been able perfectly to gratify your inordinate inclinations; there was always something wanting to complete the happiness which you promised yourselves from indulging them. He hath appointed

ed you labours and employments in the department you hold in civil society; which, filling up a considerable portion of your time, have made it necessary for you, sometimes at least, to desist from criminal pursuits, and confine yourselves within the limits of temperance, prudence, and regularity. He hath not yet suffered your hearts to become hardened in guilt: you have not hitherto been able to pluck out that sting of remorse which tortures your souls: you know well you have never been easy and comfortable in the service of the world and your own passions. Each day of your lives you meet with fresh instances of the emptiness of all worldly satisfactions, and feel how evil a thing it is to have abandoned your God. Even when you were rioting in intemperate pleasure and shameful excesses, the voice of your conscience was heard reproaching you with your baseness; and you had no other means of getting rid of its importunities, than by promising yourselves, that

that shortly you would certainly reform your conduct. While you continue, with head-long step, still running farther from your Saviour, he follows you with the tenderest affection; he shews you his wounds laid open for you, his blood spilt for the expiation of your crimes. This very moment, while I am speaking to you, his inspirations speak to your souls: he puts these truths into my mouth, and sent me here to announce them to you in particular, that now at least you may put an end to your miseries, by beginning to accomplish his will.

// Ah sinner! your whole life is a chain of graces succeeding each other! you are a child of love, the work of the mercies of your Lord. Unjust and ungrateful creature! you complain that you have no grace! Why! the Lord seems to have cast his eyes upon you with particular attention: he hath sought your salvation with as much earnestness as if you alone were to be saved among all the children of men. Alas! it is your greatest crime, that
you

you have received so many graces, and
 received them in vain. Your perdition is
 from yourself. Yes, my brethren, if you are
 lost, your ruin is your own act and deed.
 Moreover, the excuse you make use of,
 supposing it true, is senseless and absurd,
 when brought as a motive for remaining
 quiet in your situation, and indifferent
 about the reformation of your conduct;
 for, supposing it certain that grace is
 not offered you, what is the consequence?
 Oh, it is such as you cannot seriously
 think on without a chilling horror, freez-
 ing your blood and spirits. This is the
 consequence: that your God hath aban-
 doned you; that you are marked with
 the seal of reprobation; that your pre-
 sent existence upon earth is but a prelude
 to your eternal condemnation. And is
 it this dreadful idea that encourages you?
 that makes you defer your conversion?
 that stifles your remorse? that excuses
 your crimes? Gracious heaven! the
 thought that you are without grace is
 a dismal reflection indeed! It should
 terrify,

terrify, it should torture your souls, and make you grasp eagerly at every means of obtaining grace : you should allow yourselves not a moment's repose, no rest by day or night, till, by humbling your souls to the dust, and crying to the Lord with the most earnest supplications, you have prevailed on him to commiserate your distress. Can such a thought calm your mind, and assuage the sorrows of your heart?

The longer you delay your endeavours, certainly the less grace you will receive ; for, the longer you delay, the more will your crimes be multiplied : the time of mercy passes rapidly on : the measure of your iniquities is filling up ; the terrible day of vengeance approaches. If now you have not grace sufficient for your conversion, in a short time you may not have sufficient to enable you to see your misery : you may be so blinded by your corruption, as not even to perceive that you have any need of repentance.

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But acknowledge now, with candour and ingenuity, this certain truth, that you delay your conversion because you love your disorders: because you wish to continue your crimes. You are pleased that you have not that victorious grace which would deliver you from them: you are troubled and grieved at the very idea of having those chains broken with which you delight to be bound. The great St. Austin who, from a profligate libertine became the model of true penitents, was once in the same situation of mind in which you are now. In the book of his confessions, he paints with lively colouring, the dispositions of his heart at that time, and declares the motive which prevailed on him to defer his conversion: but he was too candid, too generous, to say it was any want of grace; he acknowledges it was the weakness and depravity of his own heart. In the account he gives of himself, you will find your own image. His soul was sick unto death, torn by cruel remorse. While
 he

he accused himself as the sole cause of all his misfortunes, and of that unhappy irresolution by which he put off his repentance from day to day. Still he embraced the chains by which he was bound; he made no effort to loosen them, as though they would have fallen off of themselves. The Lord, in the mean time, did not cease to chastise his heart; mingled a bitterness with all his sensual pleasures, and, with a merciful severity, destroyed the peace of his life. Still the pleasures of the world held him fast in their destructive embraces: they whispered to his soul, as they often do to yours: "What, you are going then to renounce every enjoyment? to bid adieu for ever to all that has hitherto been dear and delightful to you? What, shall you no longer be allowed to visit those persons with whom you have passed so many cheerful hours? Will you separate yourself from the companions of your sports, your mirth, and festivity? Can you quit their assemblies, their parties,
and

and societies? Do you imagine you can bear the gloom of a life so melancholy, so uniform, so temperate and regular, so different from what you have hitherto been used to?" These were the reflections which made St. Austin defer his repentance; and these are the thoughts which cause you to delay yours. It is not the want of grace; it is the dread of sacrificing your pleasures, your passions, your unjust interests; it is the apprehension of the violence you must do to your own self-love that keeps you back. This is the real case: these, sinner, these are the secrets of your soul.

But, alas, where will this end, think you? What can you expect from disguising your own hearts, and pretending you have not grace? Do you conclude from thence, that, if death should surprise you in this impenitent state, you will not be eternally lost? you cannot dare to hope that. Do you conclude, that you may continue to give a loose to your passions, and expect that God will

will, at length, touch your heart? What a preparation for grace, to render yourself daily more unworthy of it! Do you say that the hour of your conversion, if it is to come, will come, whatever course you now steer? You might as well stab yourself through the heart, under pretence that the time of your death is determined, and that the sword, poison, halter, or any other means you can make use of, will not hasten it on. All these are the conclusions of desperation and impiety.

If yet the victorious grace of heaven hath not triumphed over your heart, the only rational and wise conclusion you can draw from that circumstance is, that you are bound, as you value your immortal souls, to redouble your prayers and solicitations to heaven, to lift up your hands with more fervent supplications to the throne of God; that now you *may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid.* Labour to soften the rigors of the divine justice: begin to *prepare the ways* of your Redeemer, to
make

make straight his paths : fly from every object which you know proves fatal to your innocence ; and with a calm and collected mind, listen to the voice of truth and the inspirations of heaven : do this, and Jesus will quickly come and draw you to himself. He who died to save you, will surely stretch forth his arms to receive you, when you sincerely wish to return to him. Only desire, earnestly desire and pray, to be converted to the lord : only strive to break your chains, and they will soon fall off. Fight resolutely the battles of the Most High, confident that he will support your weakness, reanimate your drooping courage, make your enemies fly precipitately before you, and reward your successful labours with a crown of glory in a blissful eternity.

SERMON

S E R M O N I V .

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

On deferring our Conversion.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Luke iii. 4.

AGAIN, my friends, this warning voice sounds in our ears. The exhortation which was addressed to us last Sunday is this day repeated. *Prepare the way of the Lord.* When he descends on earth to visit and redeem his people, see that your souls be made ready for his reception: let them be purified by repentance, and decorated with charity: let them diffuse around the sweet odour of every virtue. But, it is for the sinner in particular that this exhortation is necessary;

for although all men, even the most just, should labour to become still more justified, more rich in merits, more pleasing and beautiful in the eyes of their Divine Spouse, and glowing with a more ardent charity on the joyful occasion of his nativity, yet the sinner—alas! the sinner is separated from him by a wide, and almost infinite interval. He has much to do; the mountains to level; the vallies to fill up; *the crooked ways to make straight, and the rough ways smooth*, before Jesus can enter into his heart, and impart to it the sweets of his presence.

To you, therefore, whoever in this assembly now stand charged with the guilt of sin unrepented of, to you I this day address myself; or rather Jesus addresses himself to you by my ministry, intreating and conjuring you, by all that you hold most dear, to begin, without a moment's delay, to prepare for him the way to your hearts. Nor is he content with giving you these exterior admonitions

nitions only ; he moreover whispers his inspirations to your souls, inviting you to his service in the tenderest manner. In the moments of solitude, in the silence of the passions, you, each of you, frequently hear his voice thus speaking in secret to your hearts, " Is it not time, now at least, to arise from that filthy sink of iniquity in which you have already lain so many years ? Oh sinner, is it not time to give peace to your mind ? to restrain and crush those disorderly passions which have produced all the misfortunes of your life ? will you not procure yourself some calm and happy days before the end of life arrives ? After having so long lived for this world, which has ever left your heart empty, uneasy, and sorrowful, will you not begin to live for God, who alone can diffuse over your soul delight and joy ? Are you not yet wearied out with struggling to support yourself against that remorse of conscience which is a continual torture to you ? against the sorrows

of iniquity which weigh you down? will you not, now at least, put an end to all your distresses, by relinquishing your crimes?"

Thus does Jesus speak to your souls: And you, to all this goodness and tenderness, what return, what reply do you make? Ah! you still hold out. By-and-by, you say, I will return to the love and service of my God: yet a little longer, and I will reform my conduct. I cannot yet begin: at present my passions are too lively and impetuous: now my connections with the world are too strong to suffer me to attempt it. Your passions and your connections with the world! these are your excuses! Well then, Christian brother, that no subterfuge may remain, I will enquire into the merits of these excuses, and undertake to shew you, that to build on such arguments, and to calm your minds in your present impenitent state with the prospect of a future conversion, is the surest presage of your eternal ruin. Only
indulge

indulge me with your attention, and wish to see the truth; and I may venture to assert, you will be alarmed at your own rashness, and terrified at the very idea of trusting to so dreadful an uncertainty. Gracious Saviour, assist me to confound those arts, by which the sinner seeks to hide, from his own eyes, the evils that threaten him; and draw him now by the force of truth and grace effectually to thyself.

I. To be condemned to a state of woful separation from all that can impart happiness; to be plunged into the deepest abyss of misery, in an eternal night of black despair, without one ray of hope to cheer the horrid gloom; to suffer the most excruciating tortures in every sense, without prospect of alleviation, is the deplorable lot of the sinner who dies impenitent. To exult in the full possession of every bliss; to be inebriated with a torrent of delights in the heavenly paradise; to see, love, and enjoy truth, wisdom, and beauty in its very fountain,

secured against any danger of change or diminution of their felicity throughout eternity, is the happy and enviable portion of the friends of God. Between these two opposite situations, is placed the term of our mortal life, in which we have the power of choosing for ourselves either the one or the other, and determining our lot for ever. On the other side the grave, there can be no liberty of choice: then the blessed will be inseparably united to their sovereign good: then, too, every effort which the wicked can make, their cries, their tears, will prove ineffectual for their relief. Between them and their God, *there is fixed a great cahos*. Where he is, they cannot ever come.

Since then we are at this instant situated between an eternity of happiness or misery; allowed, perhaps, but one short moment in which we can make the awful choice of our future unalterable destiny; considering that life passes so rapidly away; that the hour in which death will seize us is so uncertain; every
instant

instant of this present time so precious ; and the examples of those who have been surpris'd in the midst of their guilt, so frequent—thus circumstanced, is it not astonishing, is it not dreadful, to think that there can be found men who dare, for one moment, to defer their reconciliation with their offended God ? How differently do they act in every other case ! Whenever any danger threatens their life, their honour, or their fortune, instantly every precaution is used to guard against it, even while it is yet doubtful, or beheld in a distant prospect. With regard to the evils of eternity, the danger is certain and pressing ; and still their precautions against it are ever wavering, uncertain, ever neglected, and put off to another time. They sleep with the utmost composure in the very arms of death and hell, supported only by the hope that, at some future time, they shall change their lives, though yet they take no step towards that change : and, which is still more inconceivable,

E 4

those

those who defer their conversion, allow that they must be converted, or perish: they acknowledge that to die impenitent is the sure prelude to unutterable woe, and at the same time bring excuses for delaying their conversion, which are so trivial, that it may seem below the dignity of the pulpit to undertake seriously to refute them.

Their passions, they say, are yet lively and impetuous: they are now in the blooming season of youth, or in the full vigor of life, to which the gravity and seriousness of a virtuous and regular train of conduct seem less suitable. In a short time the spring of life will have passed away; then their behaviour will become naturally more staid and prudent: then, having run the giddy round of pleasure, and feeling how little real satisfaction springs from it, they shall find less difficulty in despising it: then, too, their reason will have arrived at that degree of maturity which is necessary for guiding and supporting so arduous an undertaking.

taking. When that time comes, they will begin the work of reformation in good earnest, and nothing shall induce them to lay it aside.

But stop, my brethren, one little moment. Before you lay any stress on this mode of reasoning, it is surely natural to ask you, who has assured you, that you will arrive at the term which you thus confidently mark out for yourselves? How do you know that death will not take you by surprise in the midst of these years, which you intend to devote to the world, and to the indulgence of your passions? You expect that your Lord will come to demand your accounts in the evening of life. Ah! but he may come in the morning, or at noon, when you think him to be yet at a great distance. Is the most flourishing youth, or the most vigorous manhood, any security, against death? Surely, without carrying your observations very far into what passes in the world; confining your views within the smaller circle of your neighbours,

bours, friends, and acquaintances, you will find several for whom the providence of God has opened a grave in the beginning of their career : you have known some, who, like the fairest flowers of the field, in the gayest stage of their being, were withered, and dried up in an instant of time ; and left you the mournful regret of having just seen and admired their opening virtues, their strength, their abilities, their flattering hopes, and beheld them in a moment all extinguished.

You know not, you cannot know, what will befall you on the morrow, or before the end of this very day. Every delay is big with danger and terror. You say, the Almighty hath frequently given to those whose youth was consumed in vicious pursuits, time, in a future period of their lives, to make their peace with him, and return to goodness. I know it. But what then? Will he give that time to you! Perhaps, you say, he will. Do you then trust to a perhaps, in this momentous

momentous concern? Oh! remember, that you are now consulting about the interests of your immortal soul. If you were about to embark for a dangerous voyage, or to be engaged in battle, would you say, I need not settle my temporal affairs; perhaps I shall return safe? And yet, when your soul is at stake, you can rest on suppositions and *perhappes*, and make its happiness depend upon every precarious contingency.

But now, to make that supposition, which is most favorable to you, put the case, that death does not cut you off in the vigor of your years. Tell me on what reasonable ground you build your expectation, that age will work any real change in your heart, or make you more disposed to enter on a new life than you are at this moment? Certainly, the longer you delay your conversion, the deeper is the root which your vicious affections will take in your souls; the chains of your criminal habits will wind

E 6 themselves

themselves more closely round your hearts; your corruption will spread itself still further and further. My Christian friends, if ever you hope to save your souls—and surely you would shudder and turn pale at the idea of giving up that hope for lost—if then you yet hope to save your souls, you can only expect salvation from the grace of Jesus, the first cause of all that is good. If, therefore, you do not now obtain that grace, how can you dare to promise yourselves you shall hereafter receive it? What! do you expect to be supported by the mercies of heaven, because you continue to insult them? Are you to be received into the bosom of God's goodness, because you multiply your crimes? What is become of that reason, that solidity of judgement, on which you so much pride yourselves? Is it only with regard to the interests of eternity that you are made up of contradictions, inconsistencies, and absurdities?

You

You imagine that age will bring a remedy to your disorders, and therefore change your hearts. 'Tis all illusion. I will tell you what age will do for you: it will make you abandon certain shameful vices, because years and infirmities will render you incapable of committing them, - or a pallid appetite will begin to be disgusted at them and to loath them. But, although debarred from the actual pursuit of base pleasures, or unjust interests, it does not thence follow that you will be interiorly disengaged from them in affection: it does not follow that you will repent of the past: your heart will not be changed: there you will be still worldly, ambitious, covetous, sensual. Did I say, you will not repent of the past? Ah! 'tis likely you will be then further from conversion than ever. A course of revolving years run through in the same habits; the repeated examples of the children of this world, with whom you associate; an attachment to creatures fast rivetted in your souls by long continuance

tinuance there, will make your hearts callous to every virtuous feeling; will efface even those first impressions of innocence which earlier years had never lost sight of; and the consequence will be, that you will die impenitent.

You cannot say that this is an expression of extravagant zeal: it is a truth founded on certain and almost universal experience. Examine what passes every day before your own eyes. Observe the conduct of all those of your acquaintance who have grown old in iniquity. Does their love for this world abate? No: it is extinguished only with their lives. You see the covetous man, even when tottering on the brink of the grave, more covetous, more penurious than ever. The voluptuous, even in the chills of age, if from a regard for common decency they assume a different appearance, yet, have the same taste for sensual indulgences, the same inclinations, the same heart, which in their youth they formed for themselves; though

though now in a body disfigured, enfeebled, and emaciated. They renew, in the sight of heaven, the enormities of their youth, by the complacence with which their imaginations dwell upon them: they look with an envious eye on those vicious satisfactions which they cannot now enjoy: they prove that their hearts are wedded to all the follies and vices of the young, by creeping as near to them as they can in the dissoluteness of their comportment, the licentiousness of their conversation, and the vanities of dress; even so far as often to expose themselves to public ridicule. In a word, in proportion as the world and its enjoyments retire to a greater distance, they pursue them with more avidity. The habits they have contracted make vice, in a manner, necessary, and put it almost beyond their power to subsist without it. Indeed, my friends, in old age, it will be much too late to new-model your hearts. Trust not to it; for age, very rarely, makes a true conversion.

But

But I speak now to persons of generous and liberal sentiments, who are naturally averse from any thing which is mean, base, and dishonorable. I know that your Creator formed in your hearts these sentiments; and you pride yourselves on having invariably preserved them. Permit me, therefore, to ask you; were there any good prospect of your being converted at a future time, still is not the God who made you, the Lord of all times, and of all ages? Is there one of your days which does not belong to him, or which he hath given you any right to prostitute to the world and its vanities? Is he not jealous of your heart? Does he not demand the first fruits of your life? Is your whole life too long to be employed in the service of him, from whom you received it, and who has promised it shall be succeeded by an immortal life hereafter? Oh, Christian! what are you doing? You retrench from him the most precious, the noblest portion of your years
that

that you give to his enemies; and for him you reserve the refuse of your passions, the very dregs of your life.

My brethren, whenever you deliberately determine within yourselves to put off your conversion till an advanced age, in effect you say to your God, what I cannot repeat without trembling—you dare to say to him; for, although your tongue would falter did you attempt to express it in words, yet he reads it in your heart:—"O Lord, as long as I am fit for the world and its pleasures, do not expect that I shall seek after thee. When nothing else that is attracting shall offer itself, then I will turn to thy goodness, then beg of thee to accept a heart which the world has rejected: you may be served when I can do nothing else." Wretch, unworthy ever to praise the mercies of a God whom you thus outrageously abuse! will he receive such a sacrifice as this? will he admit you to his grace and friendship? Just God, against whom then is thy vengeance enkindled,
if

if such as these feel not the most dreadful effects of it?

II. I come now to the second pretext — your affairs, your engagements with the world. It would have been a great happiness, you acknowledge, if you had given your heart to your Redeemer from your infant years: you wish you had done so: “But, you say, it is now too late for that; I have taken a different course; I have followed the common track. The torrent of the world has hurried me along; I am now very deeply engaged in its concerns; I have many and troublesome affairs upon my hands; I have contracted engagements which I cannot yet break through. Things will by and by take a better turn; I shall be more at liberty, have more leisure, and better opportunities to serve God, than I can possibly find now. When the criminal engagements I am now under shall cease, I will form no more: then, once for all, I will range myself under the banners of virtue.”

Will

Will you, indeed, my brethren? If these be your dispositions, I may venture to affirm, you most likely never will.— You wait for a more favourable situation; for a time when you will find few or no impediments, difficulties, or incumbrances: but that time will never come: one affair finished, another will start up; one temptation now indulged, will call up against you twenty others, more violent, more insurmountable. Call to mind what has heretofore befallen you: you have frequently determined in your own mind, that, such an engagement fulfilled, you would return to the service of God: you fixed that moment for the end of your crimes, and the beginning of your repentance. Well; that moment came: the death, or the inconstancy of the object, your own disgusts, or some other accident set you free; and nevertheless you are not yet converted.— Other objects presented themselves; you forged for yourselves new chains; you forgot your former resolutions; and
 wait your

your last state became worse than the first.

Indeed, my beloved friends, if the concerns of this world could excuse your delay, hardly would there be found one among the damned who is justly condemned. Do you think that those unhappy souls who are the victims of God's eternal justice, did not intend some time or other to be converted? Doubtless they did: it would be phrenzy and raging madness deliberately to choose to be lost eternally. No: ask them one by one; each will reply, that, such a business transacted, such a point gained, such an obstacle removed, he was determined to repent; and he will tell you likewise, in all the agonies of grief and despair, that death surprised him before that appointed moment came. This is a common case; alas! much too common. Your engagements, your affairs, your distractions, and temptations, will never end, till the end of life, till you close your eyes on this world for ever.

How

How often are the Ministers of God called to sinners lying on the bed of death, who are bound by a thousand chains of criminal and confined habits, which death alone will break! And what do we hear from them but expressions of bitter and useless regret, for having been thus miserably surpris'd; and vain protestations of what they would have done, if they could but have foreseen it? This, for the most part, is all they are capable of expressing or conceiving. Ah! my friends, when we are introduced in those awful moments, we should have no other duty to discharge towards our agonizing brother, but the pleasing duty of a comforter. But, alas! sad change! we are obliged to terrify him with the sight of his multiplied iniquities. Instead of being able to exhort him to meet death with joy, to smile in hope and confidence at the view of his past good deeds; we are forced to employ our labours in aiding him to recall to his remembrance the shameful disorders

ders of his life. That done, in such a confused and imperfect manner as his situation will admit of, we exhort him to weep over his crimes, to call on his Redeemer, to bathe his criminal soul in the precious blood of Jesus: we repeat to him that sacred name: we present before his dying eyes the image of his crucified Lord, to animate his hope, and melt his heart with compunction. He hears perhaps our exhortations; he gives some exterior marks of repentance. We administer to him those sacred mysteries of which we are the dispensers. But is his heart changed? Is it most probable his conversion is sincere? Ah! he has expired, and perhaps is already condemned to eternal misery. Yes, my beloved friends! when his soul has departed from the body, instead of being consoled by the hope that we have opened for it the gates of heaven, we return home pensive and afflicted; sadly ruminating on its misfortune, and bewailing its dreadfully uncertain state. If you delay your conversion,

version, this is the melancholy office we shall one day have to discharge for you.

// Oh! do not trust to that last issue. If you find it difficult to change your heart now, it will be more difficult, and next to impossible then. Come, be no longer thus miserably imposed upon: begin from this moment: try at least what you can do. When a mariner is shipwrecked, and given to the mercy of the waves, does he not try at first, whether by swimming he can gain the nearest coast, or arrive at some means of safety? Does he make no effort? use no strength? Does he say to himself, Perhaps I shall not be able to support myself, therefore I will not attempt it? No, my friends: life is dear to him. He tries, he struggles, he labours, till his strength is quite exhausted, his spirits spent: he does not give way till the violence of the billows forces him to submit to his melancholy doom.—Sinner, you are perishing: the waves rush in upon you from every side: the torrent carries you rapidly on to the
abyss

abyss of everlasting perdition. And do you lose the moments in which alone you can have any prospect of being saved, in hesitating whether you shall strive to escape the danger, when it is certain that, if you strive, you will infallibly escape it? Oh! you will not sure be so infatuated, so mad. Labour in earnest: be courageous; be vigorous; do what is in your power; and behold your Redeemer stretches out his omnipotent and compassionate arm to raise you up, to bring you safe through every peril which surrounds you, to lead you into a harbour of security and peace, and unite you to himself in time and eternity.

SERMON

SERMON V.

THE NATIVITY.

On the wisdom taught by Jesus, in the
Stable of Bethlehem.

*Glory to God in the highest; and on earth
peace to men of good will. Luke, ii. 14.*

How comfortable a prospect is laid open before us in the birth of Jesus! I will not attempt to describe it: only the eloquence of a Chrysostome can be in any degree equal to so noble a theme: "A God," says this holy Doctor, "descends upon the earth, and man is elevated to heaven. Men and Angels are associated together, and united in harmonious concert. The enmity which had long subsisted between God and man, subsists no more. Human nature enters into a covenant

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“ with the Deity. The Devil is put to
 “ shame, and compelled to a precipitate
 “ flight. Death is bound in chains.
 “ The gates of heaven are thrown open.
 “ Error is banished from the earth, and
 “ Truth resumes her dominion over the
 “ children of men. The doctrines of
 “ virtue are every where disseminated,
 “ and every where crowned with a
 “ luxuriance of fruits.” These are the
 blessings which the birth of Jesus brings
 to the earth ; and these are but a prelude
 to blessings incomparably greater in a
 future world.

Join therefore your voices with those
 of the bright hosts of heaven, and with
 the servants of God throughout the
 earth, in singing hymns of glory to God
 in the highest, while you taste the deli-
 cious fruits of that peace which Jesus
 imparts to men of good-will ; for I speak
 now only to men of good-will. I ad-
 dress myself to you who have run to
 meet and welcome your infant Saviour,
 who have humbly laid at his feet all your
 crimes

crimes and miseries, and have now good grounds to hope that you have *received the adoption of sons of God*. But to you, Christian brother, if there be any one in this assembly, whose heart is so callous to every generous feeling, as to remain under the dominion of sin and death in this season of mercy, bounty, and love; to you what can I say? To tell you to rejoice, would be to flatter you to your own destruction. Great God, how shocking is the reflection, that the human heart, formed as it is for truth and virtue, and made susceptible of every soft and tender impulse, can still remain impenetrable to the light of truth, insensible to all the attractions of virtue, and to every endearing invitation of love!

But I turn away my eyes from that melancholy spectacle, and am consoled by the hope, that we have all prepared the ways of the Lord; that Jesus is born in our souls; that we are now united to him, and wish to live henceforward for him, by him, and in him alone. If

this be your disposition, my brethren, come with me this day in spirit to the stable of Bethlehem, and contemplate your infant Saviour. There he will teach you how to accomplish the object of your desires; there he will teach you the only means of living by his spirit, and being perpetually associated with him. Nothing can separate you from Jesus, but a fondness for this world, and the things of this world; and he will effectually teach you to despise the world, and to raise yourselves above all it can promise or bestow. That I may make you anxious to acquire this heavenly wisdom, I will first explain to you its importance, and also endeavour to make you sensible that Jesus alone can teach it. That done, we will see how eloquently he does teach it from the manger in which he is laid.

I. In order clearly to discover of how great importance to our happiness, is the acquiring of that temper of mind which will enable us to despise the world, and
look

look with indifference on all that passes with time, it will be expedient to make a short enquiry into the natural condition of man in this mortal life. Man is a being possessed of an immortal soul: he has a mind capable of elevating itself, even to the contemplation of the Deity; and the desires of his heart, vast and unbounded like the immortal principle whence they proceed, are never to be satisfied but by the possession of an infinite good. When he obtains all he coveted on earth, he is still uneasy; there remains a void not yet filled up. His desires increase with his enjoyments; and, after hurrying on from one pursuit to another, he sits down breathless, and fatigued with his fruitless labour, and confesses that all is *vanity* and *affliction of spirit*.

To place the corrupting influence of our earthly attachments in a clearer light, we may likewise observe, that, however we may be seduced to deviate from the line of moral rectitude, there still remains inherent in our nature an innate

propensity towards goodness, a natural love for virtue. The principles of the law of nature are so deeply impressed on our minds, that no depravity can ever entirely efface them. An interior monitor still whispers to us, that the law of God is beautiful and lovely, and more desirable than gold and precious jewels. The most abandoned of men cannot help esteeming and venerating in others, that virtue which he has not himself resolution to practise. Every sin to which we consent, is followed by a remorse of conscience, an anguish of heart, that mingles a bitter ingredient with every pleasure, and empoisons every enjoyment.

Here then we discover the lamentable consequences of our earthly attachments: for, notwithstanding we have been thus gifted by our bountiful Creator, still so powerful are the allurements of this world, that, forgetting or relinquishing the noble objects which are suited to the faculties of our immortal souls, in contempt

tempt of the native charms which virtue displays, in spite of that fell remorse which tortures the soul after every criminal indulgence, we suffer them to drag us along to the embraces of vice, with all its baseness and deformity. The corruption of our nature by original sin has spread over our understandings a dark cloud of ignorance, and degraded the dignity of the human heart, by causing all its affections which the Creator made so noble, so great, so generous, to bend down to the earth in pursuit of low, vile, and sensual gratifications.

Hence, as we find ourselves surrounded by a variety of sensible objects which constantly present themselves to our attention, and invite our love with a specious appearance of good, we are taken by the gilded bait. The honours and dignities of this world offer to raise us to the utmost height of our wishes: its riches and possessions, with the distinctions attendant on them, dazzle our sight;

its pleasures invite us to their embraces, and assure us, that happiness is the portion of those who give a loose rein to every appetite and desire: and we are so deluded, as to employ our whole souls in the pursuit of these enjoyments; our love for them is the source of all our guilt, and of all our misfortunes. It is evident, therefore, that until our affections be disengaged from created objects, we never can attain that virtue which is the perfection of our nature, nor that happiness which is the end of our being.

II. But how shall we acquire this temper of mind? Where can we imbibe this important wisdom, which is at once the science of virtue and happiness? Will human reason alone suffice to teach it? Is it to be acquired in the schools of the Philosophers? No, my brethren: none but Jesus can enlighten our darkness; can show us, by his heavenly doctrines and divine example, the vanity of human things, and direct our bewildered steps into the way of peace, It is true,
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the ancient Philosophers were able, by the light of reason, to discover, in some degree, the necessity of despising earthly enjoyments. They even figured to themselves the image of a certain perfection of virtue, which they said would exalt man to a resemblance with the Deity. But this virtue, of which the disciples of Zeno so much boasted, which they inculcated in so many moral lectures, and have painted in all the colouring of eloquence, never had an existence among them, but in their imaginations. They pleased themselves with delineating a perfect form of wisdom, which was never realised in the conduct of human life. The faint glimmering of light which they enjoyed, proved insufficient to conduct themselves; and consequently their endeavours to instruct others were languid and unsuccessful. Moreover, their reasonings about virtue were so refined, as to be raised above the comprehension of any, but men of learning and education: the illiterate, therefore,

fore, and the vulgar, who are by much the greater portion of mankind, could receive no benefit from their instructions. Add to these observations, that they wanted authority to enforce the lessons they delivered. When they sought to persuade mankind to undervalue the joys and comforts of this life, they had nothing to offer in their place; for, with respect to a future state of existence, they were themselves wavering and uncertain.

We must therefore have recourse to a higher authority; we must be guided by a brighter and more steady light; we must go to Jesus, the eternal word of God, whose doctrines can admit of no deviations from truth and wisdom. He knows what is really advantageous to us; and that he teaches, because he loves us with the tenderest affection. Whatever counsels he gives us, whatever injunctions he lays upon us, are calculated to promote our true interests. He does not instruct us by the refinement of metaphysical disquisition, or the subtleties of logical

gical argument; he loves the great and the vulgar, the learned and the illiterate, with equal affection: and therefore hath delivered the precepts of heavenly wisdom in a style so clear and simple, that the meanest capacity can, without difficulty, comprehend all that is necessary for securing his peace and advantage in time and eternity. He is at once the source of light and strength. The heart of man is in his hands; he can fashion it according to his pleasure, and make the instructions he imparts sink deep into our souls. He is *the way*; in his footsteps we are to walk to all that is great and good: he is *the truth*; following his guidance we cannot be misled: he is *the life*; he has conquered sin and death, and opened the gates of immortality to those who put themselves under his direction, and form their lives and actions after the model he has set before them, in his own conversation among men. **Oh!** then let it be our principal study to imitate his life and conduct. And behold, my brethren,

the first instruction he gives us evinces the necessity of weaning our affections from the things of this world. The first moment of his mortal existence, he begins to teach this lesson; and he continues teaching it, to his last expiring breath upon the cross.

III. Come then, my beloved friends, *let us, with the shepherds,, go over to Bethlehem; and let us see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us.* Entering into a bleak and despicable habitation, we behold a helpless infant shivering with cold, wrapt up in mean and humble rags, incapable of utterance, weeping, suffering, and surrounded by every mark of abjection. If you give way to the feelings of flesh and blood, you will commiserate his condition; the tear of pity will start from your eyes: you will call what you behold, affliction, distress, and misery.

But, *to you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God.* Your faith informs you, that this helpless infant is He,
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who, by his omnipotent word created the heavens and the earth. Under this mean appearance He is concealed, to whom belongs *the earth and the fullness thereof*. He that lies in this manger is that Being, whose immensity fills the whole creation. This weeping child is He, who by the light of his countenance gives splendor and glory to the heavenly Jerusalem, and enkindles joy and gladness in the hearts of men and angels. He is speechless now, but he is the eternal word of God: in him are all the treasures of the knowledge of God; from him all light, all science, all eloquence is derived. You behold him in a stable, under a shelter designed for the beasts of the field, attended by his poor parents; but the eye of faith discovers millions of celestial spirits surrounding the crib in which he lies, casting their crowns at his feet, and, with profound adoration, giving to him *benediction, and honour, and glory, and power, for ever and ever*.

Whence

Whence then this poverty, this meanness? It is not, it cannot be the effect of any necessity. It must therefore be his own choice; and it is a choice made by the wisdom of the Most High God; not with a view to any advantage which could result to it from himself, but that he might teach us wisdom, and engage us to content ourselves with what he has chosen for our example. Here let us pause awhile, my brethren. Oh! how are all the maxims of worldly love, and worldly pride, here at once confuted and confounded! How are the splendours of earthly ambition eclipsed in a moment! How despicable do riches appear! How are the pleasures of this life stripped of their painted charms, when we reflect on the choice made by eternal wisdom and eternal truth!

Draw near now, and contemplate this spectacle, you who pass anxious days and restless nights intent on the acquisition of wealth, and the extending of your possessions; you, whose affections are so
captivated.

captivated by the mammon of this world,
 that to it you sacrifice your virtue, your
 consciences, your immortal souls; draw
 near, and learn how contemptible is the
 object for which you labour and toil.
 See the choice which Jesus has made,
 and learn in what estimation you ought
 to hold those riches which truth itself
 despised. You, who, in this inclement
 and severe season, when the cry of sorrow
 and distress continually sounds in your
 ears, and you are surrounded by the
 gloomy and mournful habitations of po-
 verty, sickness, and affliction, cannot
 prevail upon yourselves to part with a
 small pittance towards the relief of your
 indigent brethren in Jesus Christ, al-
 though you live in the full enjoyment of
 the superfluities, delicacies, and luxuries
 of life—come to Bethlehem, contemplate
 your infant Saviour. He will teach you
 that, instead of taking delight in a su-
 perabundance of earthly possessions, you
 should fear to be encumbered with them;
 you should consider them as a burthen,
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a heavy charge, beset with many perils. He was himself poor, that he might bring those who are possessed of affluence to a sense of their danger, from considering the opposition of their state to his; that he might induce them to look on themselves as the stewards of the great Ruler of the Universe, and hasten, with eager solicitude, to employ their superfluities in scattering blessings along the sorrowful walks of poverty and distress.

Let the slaves of worldly vanity—let those who idolize their perishable beauty—who devote a considerable part of their mornings, the most valuable portion of their time, to consultations about the frivolous article of dress, or to the providing and adjusting of vain and fanciful decorations for the body, and their evenings to the display of their finery in the gay scenes of dissipation and pleasure—let them come into the stable of Bethlehem. Surely they will not dare to stand in the presence of their humble Saviour, decked out with all
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their gaudy trappings, in a state so opposite to that which he has chosen!—No: they will blush for themselves: and being content hereafter, with giving that attention to the exterior which the decency of their respective stations may demand, they will begin to employ the hours formerly engrossed by luxury and vanity, in cultivating the beauties and graces of the mind; which, in the eyes of Jesus, will be ever estimable and amiable.

Let the proud and the haughty man, who, pluming himself on the advantages of his birth, education, and fortune, looks down with contemptuous insolence upon those of his fellow creatures, on whom Providence has not bestowed the same exterior blessings—let him learn here, that virtue, wisdom, and excellence, far superior to his own, may be found clothed in rags, and sitting on a dung-hill. Let him be convinced of this; and he will never despise any man on account of his wanting those things, which
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can never bring with them any intrinsic merit to their possessor. Ah! my brethren, when we behold how much the poor are despised by persons of superior dignity and fortune, we have great reason to apprehend, that the great ones of this age, had they been at Bethlehem at the time of the Nativity of the Son of God, would, like the Jews, have been scandalized at his poverty; would have allowed his poor parents no place in the inn; would have turned him out to all the hardships of cold and want; would have been much too delicate to visit his humble abode. While the God of heaven looked down upon it with pleasure and delight; while trembling angels ministered unto him; they, worms of the earth, would probably have passed by him with silent contempt; or, had they stopped, it would have been to laugh his poverty to scorn. I do not exaggerate; this is what is daily done to the poor, and the poor are the representatives of Jesus upon earth: he has declared, that
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what is done to them, is done also to him.

But let not the poor be disheartened. Come, my beloved, you that earn your bread by the sweat of your brow; you that are little and mean in the eyes of men, approach with confidence to your Saviour. What have you to be ashamed of in your poverty? Frequently, uneasiness and impatience are the attendants of your lowly condition. Beholding the prosperity of others, your hearts are dejected. You secretly murmur at Divine Providence, because you are not rich and great, as some of your fellow creature are, whose apparently happier lot you envy and covet. Come now, bring your murmurings and your reproaches to the stable of Bethlehem. With what will you reproach your Saviour? that he has made you like to himself, that he has delivered you from temptations? that he has secured you from dangers? that he has conducted you along the path that leads to immortal bliss? Ah! dry up those

those tears; hush those complaints: they are unworthy of you. Begin now to prize, to set a value upon your humble state. Walk cheerfully on without a sigh or remonstrance, in the footsteps of your divine master.

Thus, Christian brother, by observing attentively the example which our infant Saviour hath set before us, by laying up carefully in our hearts all that we observe as his Virgin Mother did, whether we be rich or poor, great or little in this world, we shall receive a most useful and comfortable instruction. Those amongst us who have the things of this world, will learn to use them as if they used them not; and those who are deprived of them, will feel no real pain, and little trouble for the loss. All will renounce them in affection, though they retain the possession of them for the uses for which Providence has originally designed them. We shall no longer serve *the elements of this world*; but, as it becomes those who are *the adopted sons of God*, in the midst of
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the various revolutions of the earth, heaven will be the first object of our attention; our hearts will be invariably fixed on its joys till the hour come when we shall be called to the possession of our eternal inheritance.

SERMON

11 Aug 1798

SERMON VI.

SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY.

On the value and employment of Time.

Rise, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall enlighten thee. See, therefore, brethren, how you walk circumspectly, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, for the days are evil. Eph. v. 14.

WELL indeed, well might St. Paul admonish us, that the first fruit of the wisdom which Jesus imparts to mankind, should appear in the good employment of our time. The abuse of time is the source of many evils; nay, it is true, in fact, that all the crimes of our lives imply the abuse of time. Time is the measure of life. If our time therefore be well spent, our lives are well spent; and *we walk*

walk in a manner worthy the vocation by which we have been called.

One year of this time has now elapsed, since last you celebrated the mysteries which at present are the objects of your devotion; and when you look back upon it, how short, how transient does it appear! How like a shadow has it past rapidly away, and hardly left any trace behind! It could leave nothing behind it, but stings of remorse for the crimes to which it was made witness, or those pleasing emotions which arise in a virtuous heart, from the view of the good works which have been treasured up in the course of it. You are indeed happy, if you feel many of these emotions; happy if you taste those sweets of innocence. Ah! my friends, indeed no human joy can stand the competition with them: all earthly satisfactions quickly pass away; but the delights which virtue gives, subsist throughout eternity. You are now entering on another year; perhaps the last of your mortal existence.

It may be the last to all; and it is more than probable, it will be so at least to some of us who are here assembled. If, therefore, when before the awful tribunal of conscience, you review the actions and employments which have filled up the past year;—if the retrospect give you comfort, that will be a new motive for pursuing the remainder of your way through life in the same pleasing and happy path. If, on the other hand, little presents itself in such a review, which can give you heart-felt pleasure; if the actions and occupations of the last twelve months exhibit but a melancholy scene of crimes committed, duties neglected, precious and invaluable moments squandered away, and sacrificed to folly and guilt; arise, I beseech you, from the sleep of death. Begin now to work for God, and for eternity. Work, while yet you have light; for the night is advancing fast upon you. Remember, that unless you now set your conscience in order, the year into which you are

are entering will pass the like the former: at the end of it you will find nothing in your hands, nothing laid up for the support of your souls in a future life; and days and hours which might have been the price of endless felicity, will have been prostituted to the dreadful purpose of accumulating the judgments of God upon your guilty head, and purchasing an eternity of woe.

I am confident, that were you once made truly sensible of the value of time, you would dread the loss of any part of it, you would husband it to the best advantage. I will therefore now, in the first place, make some reflections on its value; and secondly, point out the manner in which we are to employ it, so as best to answer the end for which it is bestowed upon us.

I. Had the severity of God's justice been fully exerted in our regard, the punishment of the first sin which we committed, would have been immediate death; but our redemption through

Christ Jesus has mitigated the sentence pronounced against us: his blood has blotted out the hand-writing which consigned us to instant death. Though children of wrath, and children of death, yet we live. We are allowed a certain term of years, because Jesus died in our place: the years therefore, the days, the hours, which we exist upon earth, are so many blessings derived to us from his merits. The time which we so lavishly squander away was purchased for us by the blood of Jesus; and purchased, that in it we might by our future assiduity, atone for the criminal abuse of our former time; that we might have room to merit, and an opportunity for exercising those virtues which give a title to life eternal. Consequently, each day, hour, and moment, if improved to advantage, may purchase for us an additional degree of glory in heaven. How senseless then must we be, if we suffer this precious time to pass away unprofitably!

When we consider the important uses for which time was given, and reflect
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withal on the shortness of its duration, such a conduct must appear to be at once the most lamentable of all follies, and the basest ingratitude. The end of life advances so precipitately upon us, that we cannot be too much in haste to employ the period of our existence to the greatest advantage. Were we certain we should live here during a long series of ages, even that time would not be too much to be all employed in meriting happiness which shall never end. But, at least, in such a length of time, we might have a chance of making up for the small portions of it which may have been lost. In that case, some days and hours squandered away, would be an almost imperceptible point, when compared with so many ages. But, alas! my friends, our whole life is but an imperceptible point. The longest life so quickly passes away; our years are confined within so narrow a circle, that we can have nothing to lose, nothing to spare. Like the meteor which darts a

transient gleam athwart the gloom of night, and instantly disappears, we just show ourselves upon the earth, and are seen no more: and of this short space, nearly one third part is sacrificed to sleep. When this is retrenched, what is there remaining for yourselves, in which you can lay up a provision of good works for eternity? Truly, you are objects of commiseration, if you are ever at a loss how to employ the little you have left, and seek to dispose of any part of it in vanity and folly. Oh! did you reason justly, the loss of one day would leave behind it a more bitter regret, than the loss of a fortune, of an establishment, or of any thing desirable upon earth!

Yet, how often does this precious time lie heavy upon your hands! If we look into the higher scenes of life, it seems as if the great art and study of men was to invent new modes of dissipation, new methods of making time pass imperceptibly away. Invention is put
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upon the rack to devise a variety of amusements, in order to kill time. For this end, as well as to feed a silly vanity, they employ so many hours about the frivolous article of dress; so many at cards; so many more in the insipidity of formal visits. For this, they run from one place of public entertainment to another, to routs, parties, and assemblies, in a continual round: and when they have tried every means of dissipation, every method to relieve the listlessness of indolence, they still drag on many wearisome hours, of which they know not how to dispose.

And you, my brethren, whose time is in a great measure engrossed by the care of providing for your subsistence, and a necessary attention to business; how often does the little that remains become quite burdensome to you? How frequently do you wish, by some idle, and perhaps dangerous amusement, to ease yourselves of it! There is really nothing for which men in general have

less esteem than for their time. Frugal in dispensing all other human blessings, their time they give most readily to all the world: any one may come and rob them of it. They hold themselves obliged to those who help them to pass it away in small-talk and idle chat.— Their purse, which the distresses of a fellow creature can so seldom open, is liberally opened to support those who, by furnishing new amusements, generally vain, often criminal, and always dangerous, contrive to ease them of a part of their time. By protracting the hours of sleep beyond the limits of necessary refreshment, they rid themselves of so much of their existence. Strange inconsistency! while they tremble with serious apprehension, lest their glass should be nearly run, and time be no more allowed them, the time they have they are tired of, and seek to throw it out of their hands.

Remember, my friends, I intreat you, that, time once lost, the loss is irreparable.

ble. Each day, and each moment, was given you by the Almighty, that in it you might make gradual advances in virtue. The time, therefore, which is thrown away unprofitably, leaves you in arrears, if I may so express it; and, as the length of your earthly career is fixed by Providence, the end of it arrives, while yet you are far from that degree of perfection which can qualify you for entering into the kingdom of God. In a word, my brethren, we may justly reason with respect to each moment of our lives, as we do with regard to the hour of our death. We can die but once: it is our interest therefore to die well; because we shall return no more to repair what was deficient. In the same manner, the present moment will never return: we can live it but once; when suffered to slide away unprofitably, it is lost, irrecoverably lost for eternity. Oh! perhaps you now touch the fatal moment which begins that eternity. Seize then the present time before it escape you:

turn it to advantage: let every hour be given to something serious, something great and noble, something worthy the sublime dignity, to which the grace of Christianity has exalted you; something suited to the excellence of your immortal souls. Remember that you are heirs of heaven, and are placed here for a nobler purpose than to amuse yourselves, and vainly sport away your existence.

“What then!” you will say, “is no time to be allowed for innocent amusement and recreation? no diversion to unbend the mind, and relieve the body from the fatigues of business and labour?” To be sure, my friends, there is time to be allowed for that. It would be a weakness or a cruelty in me, to pretend to deter you from it. But then, recreation supposes, that labour and pains have gone before; supposes that your necessary duties are discharged; or else it cannot be innocent. It is not to be made the principal occupation of life; but to be taken merely as a remedy for
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your weakness, and to enable you to enter upon action again with fresh vigour. When taken with that view, the hours employed in it are not lost! they are themselves meritorious; they are an increase of virtue. But, to remove every difficulty on this head, I will now proceed to show you in what manner the Gospel of Christ Jesus directs you to employ your time, in your respective situations of life.

H. Mankind may be divided into two classes. The first, and less numerous class is occupied by those whose circumstances, in point of fortune, raise them above the necessity of applying to any determinate kind of labour or occupation for the acquiring of a subsistence. These, for the most part, seem to imagine that the pursuit of pleasure is to be their principal, if not their only exercise. But, it is proper they should be put in mind, that the life of a Christian, without distinction of rank or fortune, is described in the Gospel to be a serious occupied life;

life; *a warfare upon earth*. The wisdom of God teaches us, that a life of idleness (and surely a life of pleasure is at best a life of idleness) is the parent of every evil. Remember, my friends, you whom the Almighty Ruler of the world hath placed in an elevated station, that he bestowed on you the distinctions you enjoy, to enable you to become beneficial to your fellow creatures. He hath made you his agents; he hath appointed you his representatives on earth: you are to be the instruments of his goodness, by scattering blessings around you; by giving comfort to all who are within the circle of your dependants.

The sphere of *your* beneficence is somewhat contracted, by your being debarred, on account of your religious profession, from offices and employments in the several departments of the State, which make those who discharge them with integrity, an universal blessing to the age and country in which they live. But, notwithstanding this circumstance, which I know

not whether you ought to regret, seeing the corruption, the temptations, and dangers, to which those situations are exposed; notwithstanding you are thus secluded from exhibiting those shining acts of goodness which are recorded in the historic page, you have it in your power to perform deeds of charity, which will be written in the Book of Life, in characters that shall never fade. The situation of a private Gentleman is that of which every wise man, were he allowed to choose, would certainly make choice, in preference to the distracting occupations of ambition, the toils for preferment, the slavery of power. A private Gentleman may do much good, if his heart be dilated by benevolence: he may diffuse comforts all around him: he may make his seat the hope of the afflicted, the solace of the wretched: he may make his tenants and domestics bless the hour that gave him birth. Beside the exercises of charity, and those of devotion, which will occupy a share of his time, another por-
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tion of it may be allotted to the cultivation of the mind, to improving studies, to the fine arts, and such attainments as become a Gentleman; because they adorn the mind, and enlarge its conceptions. Oh! my friends, with how much more real satisfaction, to a rational and well-formed mind, is time thus employed, than in the useless manner in which the lives of the great in general glide away! How much more noble is the occupation to be engaged in seeking out objects for the exertions of benevolence, than in pursuing birds, and following beasts which are running after other beasts, or such-like amusements, which, though innocent in themselves, when made the main business of life, are inglorious and disgraceful to human nature! Compare the pleasure which results from the God-like employment of making others happy, with the delight of lounging in a coffee-house, growing pale and stupid over a gaming-table, or with the riot of a midnight's debauch. Wretched, indeed, is that

that human being, however exalted in rank, who sacrifices health, peace, and innocence, at the low shrine of sensual gratification!

With respect to the occupations of the softer sex in high life, we cannot observe without real concern, that in these days, the discharge of domestic duties, the care of children, the management and good ordering of a family, are looked upon as virtues much too homely to be practised. They have been discarded with disgrace; and in their place has been substituted a passion for show without substance, an insatiable avidity after public and private diversions. What employments for a rational being! for a parent! for a Christian! I would not wish to be severe: I have already said, that to prohibit moderate amusements would be folly, or cruelty: he must be little acquainted with human nature, who can so moralize. Still it is evident, that, when dissipating pleasures engage the whole attention, they must

prove fatal to virtue and happiness. Assemblies, feasts, public diversions, cards, various company, &c. should ever be considered as only temporary relief. But the occupations of a Christian woman are to be far more excellent. She is appointed by Providence to superintend the interior concerns of her house; to form her little ones to virtue and piety in their tender years; to inspect the morals of her domestics. It is hers, by every soft attraction to relieve the heart of her husband from its cares, to heighten his joys, to increase his comforts, to make home the scene of his happiness. The intervals of leisure which these employments afford, may be well filled up by attending sometimes to the beauty of the mind, at least as often as to that of the person. Not to mention a variety of good offices which, by the work of her hands or other ways, she may do to those around her. It should be the employment of the young to qualify themselves for the discharge of these duties at a proper

proper time ; that they may prove not only ornamental, but really useful to society. I am sensible these are not fashionable occupations which I have been prescribing. An attention to them will not, in this age, cause you to be cried up as one that regulates taste, and gives the *ton* in polite circles. But, Christian Ladies, these are employments on which, in the awful hour of death, you may look back with pleasure : these are employments which heaven approves and will eternally reward. Nay, even in this life, they will be abundantly rewarded. Make the experiment, and you will be convinced, that there is more real delight at the family fire-side, in attending to domestic concerns, in beholding your smiling babes in their innocent sports, in a home where calmness and peace reside, than in all the extravagance and folly of fashion, that ignorant, empty, fickle, yet arbitrary tyrant.

It is proper I should now address myself to the laborious Members of the
Community,

Community, who make up the most numerous part of society, and of my present hearers. Your time, my friends, may, in general, be divided into two distinct, though very unequal portions. The first is the six days of the week, which are chiefly engrossed by your business and employments; and the other the seventh day, which is devoted to religious duties. The Almighty, seeing that the care of providing for your subsistence, and the various duties of society, must necessarily fill up a very considerable share of your time, has, out of his tenderness for your souls, and from a loving regard to your situation, set apart one day in seven for the exercises of religion; that you might not live wholly for this world, and forget that future life to which all the employments of this must ever be directed. On that day, being strictly prohibited from attending to your usual occupations, you have leisure to converse with heaven, to familiarize yourselves with spiritual and
divine

divine objects, and by humble supplications to draw down blessings on all your undertakings. This end is answered, and your time is well employed, if a considerable part of that day be given to these exercises. That day is lost, it is criminally abused, if spent in dressing, visiting, trifling conversation, parties of pleasure, feasting, and merriment. It is doubly lost, my brethren, doubly abused, if spent, as alas ! too frequently it is, in intemperance, drunkenness and guilt. It would have been better, much better, to have violated the precept by labouring, or attending to your business, as on other days, than to have prostituted that sacred day, which heaven claims for its own, to the melancholy purpose of accumulating the divine vengeance on your souls by criminal excesses. I repeat it again : that day was given you for the exercises of piety, and for improvement in virtue ; and therefore, if it be filled up with any thing else, however

ever in itself innocent, it is shamefully and ungratefully abused.

But, you will say, " what can I do to employ it in this manner? When I have assisted, in the morning, at the divine sacrifice, I see nothing more that I can do, at least nothing necessary to be done: the remainder of the day may surely be given to innocent amusements." You see nothing else necessary to be done! When you say that, have you, by serious meditation on the truths of the Gospel, informed your minds by heavenly wisdom, and made your heart enamoured of the beauty of virtue? Have you, by the reading of the Scriptures or some pious book, edified yourselves and families? You cannot find what to do! Are your children and servants well instructed in the principles of religion and christian morality? Nothing of all this has been done: and you know not what to do! Merciful God! the solitaries of the desert, whose time was wholly devoted to intercourse
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with heaven, complained that it passed too rapidly away : they grieved that the morning-light broke it upon them too early, and called them off from the continuing of that prayer and praise, which, in the silence of the night, they poured forth before the throne of the Most High. And you—you, in the midst of so many worldly sollicitudes; you, bound by so many distracting obligations to your neighbours, to your children, to your superiors, &c. you who have but one day in seven which you can give to these pious occupations, you think a considerable part of that one day too much to be employed in blessing and praising your Maker? I say a considerable part of it ; for I do not wish you entirely to deny yourselves recreation on a Sunday. No : when the essential business of the day has been attended to, then in God's name recreate yourselves. You will then stand in need of some relaxation. Take it, therefore; amuse yourselves ; and heaven will approve your virtuous pleasures.

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Your piety in sanctifying the Lord's day will bring blessings on the other, by much the larger portion of your time, which is given to the honest labours of your calling. All the employments in which you are engaged, however various and of their own nature indifferent, are pleasing to God, who placed you in those circumstances which make them necessary : the time spent in them will be an increase of merit, provided they be all accompanied and sanctified by a spirit of religion. For this end, let them never so wholly engage your time, as to allow you no moments for prayer. Begin and end each day, at least, by that holy exercise. Never forget, that your first profession is that of a Christian. You are a Christian before you are a merchant, a tradesman, a labourer, the master of a family, a servant, or any thing else on earth. Let the duties of Christianity, therefore, hold a distinguished place among your other employments. An assiduity in the exercises

cises of prayer and meditation will not be an hindrance to your other employments, provided you trace out for yourselves an orderly and regular plan of conduct. Have your fixed hours for prayer, for labor, for recreation, and so on? By that means, one exercise will lead you cheerfully on to another: you will command your business, but never suffer it to command you. Follow this method for the ensuing year: and you will find time sufficient for every duty incumbent on you, as men, and as Christians. Then, besides the ease and pleasure with which you will go through your occupations, your days will be full days; each action of your lives will add a new jewel to that crown of glory, with which Jesus one day wishes to present you.

Come, my brethren, let us all go in spirit to the stable of Bethlehem, and lay before our Saviour the ensuing year, and all the years of our lives. We will say to him, with contrition and humility
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of heart, " Divine Jesus, thou sovereign dispenser of times and moments, in whose hands are all my days and years; behold the largest and most precious part of my life has passed away, and I fear is lost: Oh, God of mercies, wilt thou suffer me thus to go on, and to arrive at the end of life before I begin to live for thee? Forbid it, Lord, out of the abundance of thy clemency forbid it. I now offer to thee the remainder of my days: receive them for thy own; and by the influence of thy heavenly graces, cause them to be filled with virtues and merits which may glorify thy name, and in which my soul may rejoice for all eternity.

SERMON

11 Aug 1790

S E R M O N VII.

SUNDAY BEFORE THE EPIPHANY.

On Regularity in the Conduct of Life.

Let all things be done decently, and according to order. 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

LAST Sunday, my brethren, when I endeavoured to convince you of the value and importance of time, and to show you the means of improving it to advantage; I counselled you to trace out for yourselves a regular plan of life; to which, some extraordinary cases excepted, you should invariably adhere. What I then but slightly touched on, I purpose to treat more fully this day; for to me the subject appears deserving of a particular investigation. So important
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is it, my friends, that should I be so fortunate as to engage your attention to it, I trust in the divine goodness, this year will be happily distinguished from all your former years, will be made fruitful in good works, rich in merits, and abound with every consolation.

It may seem to you at first sight, that the observing of order in the various occupations and concerns of life, is not a matter of such consequence as to deserve to be much insisted on. It did not seem so to the great Apostle, who thought it not below the dignity of his sacred ministry, to recommend it to the Corinthians in the words of my text : *Let all things be done decently and according to order.* Nor can it ever seem so in the eye of prudence and rational discernment. I hope soon to convince you, that, without order and method, you can hardly discharge properly any of your duties : and consequently, that, considered in a religious light, regularity merits

merits a greater degree of attention than is commonly paid to it.

I say, considered in a religious light : for although the observance of order hold not the highest rank among the injunctions of the Christian religion ; though it claim not equal dignity with the commandment of divine love, and the exercises of faith, hope, and repentance ; yet it possesses its separate importance, by contributing not a little towards punctuality and facility in the discharge of those higher and more essential duties ; and therefore justly demands a share of a Christian's attention. As, in every well-connected piece of mechanism, the subordinate springs or wheels, though apparently insignificant, and unnoticed by a heedless observer, are each of them necessary to the carrying on of its operations ; so, in the variety of moral and religious precepts, one reflects light upon another, one facilitates the observance of another, and all jointly contribute to that perfection

of character, to which every Christian is bound to aspire.

Indeed, if you look abroad into the world, you may discover, even at the first glance, that the life of the wicked, and of the libertine, is always a life of confusion : but, when the neglect of order is observed to be ever the concomitant of vice, the inference is natural, that the preservation of it must be favourable to virtue. God is not the author of confusion ; he is a lover of order ; and all his works are full of order. But where confusion is, there is its close attendant—every evil work.

I intreat, therefore, your favourable attention, while, in the sequel of this discourse, I shall point out some of those parts of conduct, in which the preservation of your virtue, and the attainment of true and constant peace, particularly require that order should take place ; and show you at the same time the miseries both temporal and eternal, which flow from the neglect of it. I will therefore recommend to you order in performing

forming the duties of your station, order in the distribution of your time, order in the management of your fortune, order in the regulation of your amusements, and choice of your society; that so all things may be done decently, and according to order.

I. First then, as to the duties of your state of life. Every man, in every department of society, the king, the statesman, the soldier, the artisan, the master, the servant, has certain particular duties to comply with, either public, domestic, or private, which successively require his attention. We in particular, my brethren, who live in the midst of the agitations and bustles of the world, are called upon by Almighty God to exert ourselves in our respective stations, that we may promote his honour and glory, at the same time that we become useful to ourselves and our fellow creatures. If, therefore, it be your wish to correspond with the intentions of Providence, by discharging your duties with propriety, you must be careful to have all the employments

ployments of your station, whatever they may be, so justly arranged, that each duty may keep its separate place, without encroaching on the other. In proportion as the multiplicity and variety of your affairs increases, the observance of order becomes more indispensably necessary for you; and let your train of life be ever so simple and uniform, however little you may be engaged in the hurry and bustle of life, yet you cannot fail to lose something, and a great deal too, by the neglect of regularity. When I say you will lose something, I speak not merely of worldly interests; though, that you will lose there likewise, is very evident; but it would ill become me, in this sacred place, to dwell principally on those inferior concerns: I call upon you to attend to higher interests; you will lose something of your eternal interests; and such a loss cannot be deemed inconsiderable. For, the orderly conduct of your temporal affairs forms a very material part of your duty as Christians; and by it you are to perform your actions in such a manner,

as

as to make them meritorious of immortal bliss.

Perhaps you can hardly be persuaded of this truth. The greater part of Christians seem inclined to consider the employments of their station in the world, as entirely distinct from the duties of religion: they are too apt to imagine, that, if they are punctual in the exercises of devotion, which are what they understand by religious duties, they are at liberty to act in worldly matters according to what plan they choose. This is a very erroneous notion. To reason thus, is entirely to mistake the nature of the Christian religion. The influences of the religion of Jesus are not to be confined to a cell, or a cloister: it not only superintends the duties of prayer and meditation, but descends into all the public and private walks of life; breathing a spirit which is to pervade, animate, dignify, and perfect, the most minute of our occupations. All your employments, my brethren, are properly religious.

gious exercises. Who has allotted you these employments? who placed you in the circumstances which make them necessary, either to your subsistence, or your well-being? Doubtless, it was that God whom your religion honours and serves. In discharging them, therefore, you do him homage. He gave you superiors to obey, or inferiors to command; he sent you children to provide for, families to maintain: he has marked out to you the labours and cares of your station, as the appointment of his adorable will. In all this, he has contrived, with infinite wisdom, to give you an opportunity of bringing into exercise all the virtues which compose the character of a Christian; an occasion of exercising your justice, candour, and veracity in your dealings with each other; your fidelity to every trust; your conscientious discharge of every office committed to you; your affection for your friends; your forgiveness of your enemies; your compassion and charity for the distressed;

your

your temperance and moderation in prosperity ; your patience under afflictions ; cheerfulness in poverty ; calm resignation to his will in every unlucky accident. Oh ! what a train of heroic virtues might you display, in the very meanest of your employments, if you were always careful to do them well, with an upright intention, actuated by a wish to approve yourselves to Heaven !

Whether your station in the world be high or low, is a circumstance of no considerable moment. Human life is aptly enough compared to a stage, on which one acts the part of a king, another, that of a beggar ; and the applause is not given to him who plays the part of the king, any more than to him who personates the beggar ; but to him, whatever he be, who acts the part allotted to him with the greatest propriety of character. By fulfilling all your obligations in proper time and place, you make *your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father who is*

in heaven. The sanctity we aspire to does not consist in doing extraordinary actions, says a great Prelate, but in doing our ordinary actions extraordinary well. But will they, can they be done well without regularity? Will not hurry, perplexity, and confusion, take off much from their perfection? You well know, that, for want of your having traced out for yourselves an orderly plan of life, many of your duties have been very ill done; perhaps not done at all. What you neglect to do in its proper place must be done afterwards, when some other duty calls for your attention. Thus you suffer a multitude of affairs to crowd upon you together. These different obligations distract and bewilder your mind; and when that is the case, your own experience tells you, that you either neglect equally all your duties, or at least frequently sacrifice the most important to that which was comparatively of trifling consequence.

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By conducting your affairs with method and order, you will be enabled to give to each duty a becoming share of attention. We shall not then see you acting only by fits and starts; one day neglecting the duties of your station, to spend your time wholly in the church; another, so immersed in worldly concerns, or engaged in scenes of pleasure and gaiety, as to admit no thought of God or eternity: but your virtue will be ever equal, ever consistent with itself, and diffused throughout the whole uniform tenor of your lives.

This regard to order will likewise insure you an interior peace of mind, and constant cheerfulness of temper; for you will find, that a peevish and fretful disposition is ever the characteristic of such as are negligent of it. The hurry and confusion in which they live; the difficulties they have to struggle with; the uneasiness which they interiorly suffer; four their dispositions, make them discontent with themselves, and a cause of

discontent to all about them. But, if order must be maintained in your affairs, it will be necessary that you attend to order in the distribution of your time.

II. That portion of time which Providence hath allotted for the measure of your life, is intended partly for the concerns of this world, partly for those of the next; yet so that the interests of the earth be made ever subordinate to those of eternity. In the distribution of your time, give to each of these concerns that space which properly belongs to it. Let not the hours of amusement and pleasure interfere with the discharge of your necessary affairs; and let not any affairs encroach upon the time which is due to devotion. *All things have their season, says the wisest of men, and in their times all things pass under heaven.* (Eccl. iii.) Delay not till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day. Why should you overcharge the morrow with a burthen which belongs not to it? To-morrow will but suffice for the discharge of its own duties; if you
throw

throw any more into it, you introduce confusion, and then nothing will be well done. Every morning, when you arise, draw out a plan of the transactions of that day. Follow that plan so steadily, as not to suffer any thing, unless of very particular moment, to engage you to deviate from it. It will be a light which will guide you through all the intricacies and perplexities of the most busy life.

Be ever impressed with a just sense of the value of time. Remember, that by a fatal neglect and loss of it, you store up for yourselves many future pains and miseries. Bitter repentance will hereafter seek in vain to recall the time which you now suffer to pass thoughtlessly away. What you omitted to do in the moment when it ought to have been done, will be the torment of some future moment. If therefore you desire to avoid the terror and agonies of a too-late repentance, do now what then you will wish you had done.

Seize, therefore, the moments as they pass by you; and prolong them by a regular and orderly management. By these means you will be able, in some measure, to redeem the time you have already lost. You will find it possible to live much in a little space; more in a few years than others do in many: you will find leisure to attend to the present, look back on the past, and provide for the future: you will be able to live for God, and for your own souls, without neglecting any of the lawful interests of this world. All your hours will serve some useful purpose, and the memory of them will remain to give you comfort for ever.

III. Introduce order into the management of your fortune. Whatever be the extent of your possessions, whether great or small, let the administration of them proceed with method and economy. Examine your situation from time to time, and make your expences proportionable to your means.

Provide what is necessary, before you indulge yourselves in any thing superfluous. Do justice to all with whom you are any way concerned, before you enter upon works of liberality. In a word: fix such a plan of living as you find your circumstances will admit of; and adhere to it invariably against every temptation to improper excess.

Never perhaps was admonition more necessary than this is to the age in which we live; an age manifestly distinguished by a propensity to thoughtless extravagance, and in which all the different ranks of men seem to press forward, stimulated by the empty vanity of imitating the manners of those above them. Now, in the higher orders of life, every place abounds with the thoughtless, the negligent, the dissolute; whom the viciousness of their own inclinations, or the seducements of alluring companions, have engaged in habits of expence, and accustomed to move in a round of pleasures, disproportioned to their condition; who,

who, fascinated by the enchantments of custom, avoid thought because they know it will be painful; and continue from day to day, and from month to month, to anticipate their revenues, and sink every hour deeper into the gulphs of usury and extortion. Now the tradesman strives to make an appearance equal to that of the gentleman; and, for that end, affects every distinction, and runs into every fashionable extravagance. The footman puts on, together with the livery, an affectation of the manners and extravagances of his master; and the maid-servant is uneasy, unless she consume her little income in purchasing articles of dress similar to those worn by her mistress. All seek to vie with their superiors in every mode of luxury and ostentation; and justify their vanity and folly by saying, "it is the fashion of the times;" and they must "live like other people."

Were the consequences of this infatuation no other than the wasting of your

substance, and the giving of yourselves up to the gripe of poverty, which is the more painful to those who have wantoned in greater abundance, and indulged their appetites with more profusion; surely that alone were sufficient to deter you from it. How truly contemptible is the character of the prodigal! Every man, whose knowledge or whose virtue can give value to his opinion, looks on him with scorn or pity. He is animated in his mad career only by those who are thoughtless and abandoned like himself, and devoid alike of knowledge, and of virtue: praised only by wretches who consider him as subservient to their purposes; who, while they exteriorly applaud, rob him, secretly ridicule him, and triumph over his weakness; and, when all is dissipated, will be the first to turn upon him with insolence, and reproach him with the very vices which themselves have promoted.

But prodigality does not only sink men to contempt and misery; it frequently impels

pels them to open crimes. When they have begun with ostentation and vanity, they often end in infamy and guilt.— How frequently do they violate every law of justice; employ every species of fraud and deceit! How many just debts do they leave unpaid! How many restitutions unthought of! How cruelly do they shut their ears against the cries of their indigent fellow creatures, and suffer them to pine in want, rather than diminish the ostentation of their appearance! My brethren, a little observation will convince you, that this boundless extravagance, and the itching which men have to appear above their station, give birth to the greater part of those atrocious crimes which fill society with disquiet and terror. By these the gamester is trained up to fraud: from these our streets are each night crowded with unhappy wretches, the victims of prostitution, seduced themselves, and seducing others, to guilt, to misery, and the most loathsome of all diseases, the curse of
 God.

God on the violation of nature's laws: these lead the robber to violence, and the assassin to blood-shed.

Be assured then, that order, frugality, and economy, are the necessary supports of Christian virtue, and will deliver you from the assaults of many very dangerous temptations. How humble and trifling soever these qualities may appear to some people, they are the guardians of innocence. Many a man has ended a wretched life in guilt and infamy, who, had he not aspired above his station, might have descended to the grave, respected by men, and the favourite of heaven. From the moment you live beyond your fortune, and above your station, that moment you enter on the path of danger: precipices surround you: every step you advance may lead to mischiefs, which yet lie concealed, and to crimes that will involve you in everlasting perdition.

IV. Observe order in your amusements; that is, allow them no more than their

their proper place : study to keep them within due bounds : mingle them so prudently with your serious duties, that they may relieve the mind, and be a preparation for acting with more vigour in the discharge of your obligations. We have naturally so strong a propensity to ease and pleasure, that even the most innocent recreations will prove dangerous, if not confined within just limits. Without this steady precaution, instead of being the amusement, they may become the whole occupation of your lives, and the bane and destruction of your souls.

V. Preserve order likewise in the choice of your society. Select with prudence those with whom you choose to associate, and let virtue be the object which determines your choice. Still, however virtuous your company, allot yourselves a due share of time for retirement and reflection. Endeavour in the first place to make yourselves happy at home. A wise and prudent Christian will

will find his chief satisfaction in the company of his wife, his children, and family. Depend upon it, those who know not how to enjoy themselves at home, will never be long happy abroad. Providence has intimately connected each of you with your own family. Home therefore should be the seat of your comforts, the scene in which you exercise your virtues.

By this fondness for home, it is past conception how much evil you may avoid. When we look into those public haunts of dissipation, where men spend so much of their time, and sacrifice it to intemperance and every excess, how can we imagine they can frequent them, and preserve either their peace or their innocence? You hear there the vociferations of merriment; but you find not the tranquility of cheerfulness.— There the object is to inflame the imagination to a momentary jollity, by the help of drink and riot: the first business of the night is to stupify recollection.

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No, my brethren, neither comfort, wisdom, nor virtue dwells there. By wandering from home, you expose yourselves to every temptation: by that you find your propensity to dissipation continually increase: by that your aversion from every thing serious and improving is nourished. When example leads where passion drives, impotent will be all your endeavours to prevent being whirled away in the giddy round of intoxicating pleasure.

It will be difficult in the beginning to withdraw yourselves from the crooked paths of a disorderly and irregular course of life. But then reflect, my brethren, that every thing great and useful is to be attained only by labour and pain. Do a little violence to yourselves now at the beginning of this year, and before the end of it good habits will be formed; the path of virtue will become daily more smooth before you; you will walk through life virtuous and happy, revered by men, and esteemed by the Almighty,
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the fovereign and unerring Judge of merit. Seek first to be approved of by Heaven; and let all the other advantages resulting from a life of order and regularity hold a secondary place in your esteem.

Suffer not this year to pass, as perhaps so many former years have done, before you have begun to live for any good purpose. Ah! my brethren, why were we placed upon earth, but to merit immortal bliss by the virtues which fill up the space of our earthly existence? Whatever we do for this world only, will perish with this world; that which is done for God will be immortal, as God is immortal. The servants of this world serve a tyrant who is ungrateful, unjust, fickle, peevish, and at best, incapable of making them happy: our services are done for a master who is generous, faithful, just, tender, loving, and alone able to bestow on us a recompence which corresponds with the nobleness of our views, and the dignity of our being.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE
EPIPHANY.

On Exterior Devotion and Religious
Ceremonies.

*I beseech you, brethren, by the mercy of
God, that you present your bodies a
living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God,
your reasonable service. Rom. xii. 1.*

IT is the union of devotion to God,
and charity to every neighbour, that con-
stitutes the respectable character of a
Christian. Neither of these qualities,
separated from the other, can ever ar-
rive at perfection, or indeed enjoy any
durable existence. Yet there are some
speculating geniuses who contend, that
the whole of Religion consists in deeds of
benevo-

benevolence to our fellow creatures; excluding all the devout affections, nay, treating them with contempt, as fit only for weak and superstitious minds. I might stop here to refute this opinion; but it would be a very unnecessary undertaking: for it is rejected by the very feelings of an honest heart the instant it is proposed: since it evidently implies either a total want, or a wilful suppression, of some of the best and most generous affections belonging to human nature.

Nor indeed is the refutation of this erroneous sentiment an object of so much importance; since the number of its abettors is very inconsiderable, compared with the multitude of writers, who, bestowing the highest encomiums on the devout affections, have denied the utility, or at least the necessity, of any exterior mode of worship, or outward observances of religion. These, as may be expected, have not failed to throw much censure on the Catholic Church,

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on account of the various observances the commands, and the multitude of ceremonies with which they pretend our mode of worship is encumbered and deformed. Thus our doctrine of the divine institution of seven sacraments; our fasts and our abstinences; the tributes of respect and veneration which we pay to the Saints, whom we suppose to reign with Christ; the decorations of our temples and altars; the outward pomp and splendour of some parts of our Church service; are represented by most of those who dissent from our communion, as appendages that rather crowd and disfigure the edifice of religion, than tend to its improvement or its ornament.

St. Paul, nevertheless, in the words of my text, exhorts us not only to serve God with the interior faculties of our souls, but to present to him also our *bodies a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing, our reasonable service*. Now this evidently cannot be done without some exterior marks

marks of devotion, however they may be manifested or diversified. Guided therefore by the doctrine of the Apostle, and supported, as I conceive, by great strength of argument, I mean this day to enter upon a justification of those ordinances of the Christian Church, which establish determined forms of exterior worship; and to take notice of the objections generally made to the particular observances enjoined in our communion.

It is a subject which probably you have not often heard treated; though to you, in your present circumstances, a rational discussion of it cannot fail to prove highly advantageous. I shall therefore undertake to show you, in the first place, the principles on which is grounded the necessity of exterior worship in general; secondly, the necessity and utility of some determined form of worship, and exterior rites and ceremonies; and, thirdly, the utility of the ceremonies prescribed by the Catholic Church, in the

celebration of the divine mysteries, the administration of the sacraments, and other ordinances of the Christian Religion.

I. That the worship of the Supreme Being is to be carried on principally in the souls of men, is a truth which none can call in question. Religion resides in the heart, and devotion is but the exercise of all its affections about objects divine and immortal. The exercise of these affections is the substance of piety. Consequently, if the soul be deliberately distracted, inattentive, cold, or indifferent, the expressions of prayer, praise, or thanksgiving, are no part of true religious worship. The devotion of the blessed spirits consists in their contemplating the infinite perfections of their Creator, uniting themselves to him by the tenderest emotions of pure and perfect love, and eternally praising, blessing, and glorifying his adorable majesty.— This is the only devotion of a pure spirit. But you must reflect that man is
a com-

a compound being: he possesses a soul which assimilates him to the blessed angels, and a body by which he constitutes a part of the visible creation. Now, if he be bound to exercise all the powers of his soul in adoring that Being from whom he received them, he must be equally bound to devote his corporal faculties to the honour of the same sovereign Lord of all things visible and invisible; who not only gave him an immortal soul, but created and fashioned his body also, and endowed it with its various faculties and senses. Man therefore cannot be justified in confining his devotion merely to the operations of the soul, supposing it in his power so to confine it; but must exert his visible faculties in harmony with the pious affections of his heart.

Hence, independently on any positive injunction from the Deity, under the guidance of the law of nature only, interior homage is always so connected with the exterior expressions of it, that, as a

wise Heathen hath long ago observed,
 “if you explore the regions of the earth,
 “you may find cities without walls,
 “without letters, without policy, or any
 “of the arts of cultivated life; but no
 “where do you find a city without
 “temples and Gods, a city which em-
 “ploys not prayers or oracles, which
 “offers not sacrifice in order to obtain
 “blessings, or avert impending evils.”

In the Christian dispensation, the same law which obliges us to believe revealed truths, commands us also to make public profession of our belief, to give conspicuous marks of our faith and religion. *This, says St. Paul, is the word of faith which we preach: that if thou confests with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God hath raised him up from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed. (Rom. x.)* By these manifesta-

manifestations of our pious affections, we give glory to God before our fellow creatures; and invite them to join us in every testimony of gratitude for his infinite goodness. By these we edify our brethren, and animate them to virtue; we encourage those weak and timid minds which might be overpowered by the public derision that piety so often meets with, to stand with collected firmness against all the malicious attacks of the slaves of this world: by these means, likewise, we repair, in some measure, the scandal given by our many violations of the divine law; we console the just and the friends of God, and bring the impious, and the enemies of piety and religion, to shame and confusion.

Notwithstanding these arguments so forcibly evince the obligation of external worship, still we hear frequently repeated, that true piety is in the heart alone; that a man may be a friend and servant of God, just, humane, charitable, generous, and possessed of every virtue, without

any display of devotion, without going through any forms of worship ; that the universe is the temple of the Divinity : that exterior religious rites are not the injunctions of Jesus Christ, but the inventions of men. My brethren, when next you hear this language, examine a little into the general conduct of those who hold it. Are they, who pretend that interior virtues are alone essential, the most distinguished for those essential virtues of which they talk so much ? While they discard outward forms, do they give to God that heart which they acknowledge belongs to him ? Do they sacrifice to him all the faculties of their souls ? Do they worship him in spirit and truth ? I appeal to their own consciences. No : while all those who truly love God, and are distinguished for doing every charitable office to their neighbours, are assiduous in expressing their faith and their devotion to Christ Jesus, those who evidently live only for the gratification of their unlawful desires

tell

tell us continually, that it suffices to give the heart to God; that there is the essential point. It being evident to the world, that their exterior speaks no piety or religion, they find it expedient to persuade others, and perhaps sometimes themselves, that outward appearances are superfluous; and screen their characters behind a pretended goodness of the inward man, of which we see no marks, and which cannot be so easily searched into and estimated.

Of determined forms of worship I shall speak presently. But surely it were to mispend your time, to dwell any longer on proving the propriety of some kind or other of exterior worship. On that head I need not reason, but only appeal to your feelings. Can it be possible that true piety should reside in the heart, without manifesting itself in the exterior? Will not the eyes, the countenance, the gestures, spontaneously disclose the feelings of the soul? When the soul melts with compunction, do not tears naturally

stream from the eyes? If the heart glow with love, or beat with gratitude, can the countenance appear languid, cold, and indifferent? Does not the eye brighten with joy, and deaden in anguish and affliction? Oh! the ruling affections of the soul must show themselves, must break forth. I know that the appearances of devotion may be put on when the heart has no feeling; but, if the heart do feel, it is impossible it should not diffuse a manifestation of its feelings over the exterior. When the soul overflows with devout affections, it is her comfort and delight to pour herself forth in every testimony of duty and gratitude: it would be doing too much violence to herself to restrain them. Scarcely does religion furnish pious and devout exercises sufficient to satisfy the eagerness and ardour of a faithful and loving heart.

Having thus briefly established the necessity of external worship in general, and its intimate connection with the de-
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vout affections of the soul, I come now to point out the utility and necessity of determinate forms and ceremonies in religion.

II. The ceremonies and observances used in the Christian religion are of two kinds. The first have been instituted and determined by Christ himself; such as the sacred rites essentially required for the administration of the Sacraments, and the celebration of the divine mysteries. The second kind are those which have been appointed and commanded by ecclesiastical authority, and constitute what is called Church Discipline.

Now, that you may discover the motive which induced our divine Law-giver, to institute these sensible signs and determined rites, you must observe, that, had man remained in the state of original justice; had his reason continued to hold supreme dominion over his imagination, his senses and passions; then truth and virtue in their most simple and naked forms would have had free access

to his mind, and easily captivated his heart: but the undue use of creatures, having divested him of his native dignity, has caused his passions and senses to rebel against his reason. Hence he is become earthly and carnal, incapable of elevating himself to the knowledge and love of his Creator, without the aid of those very creatures which had, in the beginning, occasioned his disobedience and fall. Our souls cannot act with any vigor, unless aided by the senses of these mortal bodies with which they are clothed. We must have sensible objects to enliven our faith, to attract our love, to nourish our hope, to command our attention, to be bands of union between us and our fellow creatures on earth.

The religion of man, therefore, in his mortal state, must require sacrifices, oblations, sacraments, public prayer, and other outward forms of worship. Thus attended did Religion appear upon the earth, immediately after the banishment of our first parents from the ter-

restrial paradise. Abel offered sacrifices :
 Enoch invoked the name of the Lord,
 with ceremonious rites : the Patriarchs
 erected altars : the Jewish law abounded
 with an almost infinite variety of cere-
 monies, practices, and observances. In
 like manner, although the Law of grace,
 possessing the substance of those good
 things of which the Mosaic dispensation
 exhibited the shadow only, has abrogated
 the greatest part of the Jewish ceremo-
 nial laws ; yet it has introduced others,
 though fewer in number. Hence the
 eternal *word* of God *was made flesh, and*
dwelt amongst us in a visible and sensible
 manner ; and the mystery of his incar-
 nation, continued upon our altars under
 mysterious signs, will remain, to the
 consummation of the world, the exercise
 of our faith, and the consolation of our
 earthly banishment. Hence Jesus has
 united his disciples together under a
 visible authority upon earth, by the pro-
 fession of the same faith, by the partici-
 pation of the same sacraments, by the
 16 oblation

oblation of the same spotless victim; and has appointed public prayer, by promising a special attention to the united supplications of his servants, and declaring, that *where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he is in the midst of them.*

III. We will now consider the utility of some ceremonies and observances prescribed in our communion, which are most frequently censured by those who dissent from it.

The Catholic Church, walking in the footsteps of her divine founder, who, in the institution of the sacraments, in the curing of the man born blind, in the healing of him that was deaf and dumb, and on other occasions, was pleased to make use of corporeal substances and ceremonious rites, has ever enjoined various observances, practices, and ceremonies, in addition to those which are expressly commanded by the divine law. The utility of these institutions, how much soever it may have been

been controverted, must, I am persuaded, appear very evident to every dispassionate mind. For, it will, I trust, be readily acknowledged, that the imagination of the bulk of mankind is much more alive than their judgement. Every one must have observed, that truths clothed in that form which may enable them to strike the senses, have incomparably more force on the minds of the illiterate at least, who are always the most numerous portion of mankind, than those which are addressed to the understanding only. Nay, even the most philosophic mind cannot restrain its attention from frequent wanderings and distractions, without calling in the senses to its assistance. The use, therefore, of ceremonies in religion, is a kind of eloquence which fixes the attention and affects the hearts of those to whom they are properly explained, much more efficaciously than any cool, plain, and didactic discourse, when separated from them.

In

In confirmation of what I have here advanced, I will give you the sentiments of a Protestant writer now living, whose moral essays are much and deservedly esteemed. " If all men, says he, were
 " enlightened by education and philo-
 " sophy, and at all hours actuated by
 " the principles of reason, it would be
 " unnecessary to have recourse to ex-
 " ternal objects in producing devout and
 " virtuous affections. But, as there
 " must always be a great majority, who,
 " for the want of opportunities or capa-
 " cities for improvement, are weak and
 " ignorant ; and as even among the
 " wise and learned there are none who
 " are constantly exempted from the
 " common infirmities of human nature,
 " it becomes expedient to devise modes
 " of operating on the soul, through the
 " medium of the senses. It was for this
 " reason, that in all great communities,
 " the officers and offices of religion have
 " been furrounded with whatever is
 " calculated to rouse the attention, to
 interest

“interest the heart, to strike the eye,
 “and to elevate the imagination. I
 “cannot help thinking, therefore, that
 “those well-meaning reformers, who
 “wish to divest religion of external
 “splendour, are unacquainted with the
 “nature of man, or influenced by nar-
 “row motives....and that they who re-
 “pudiate all ornament and all the modes
 “of affecting the senses of the vulgar,
 “in the offices of religion, as indecent,
 “impious, or improper, do not recollect
 “the temple of Solomon, but suffer their
 “good sense to be overpowered, in
 “this instance, by the zeal of a barba-
 “rous fanaticism.” (Essays moral and
 literary, by Vicesimus Knox. No. 151.
 t. 2. p. 274.) So far this Author, who,
 notwithstanding he roundly declares his
 detestation of what he is pleased to call
Popery, yet proceeds to acknowledge,
 that many ceremonies admitted in our
 religion appear to him highly useful.

But it is said, these ceremonies are
 too much multiplied. My brethren, if
 they

they are really incentives to piety and devotion, can a Christian consistently wish them to be diminished? Should we desire to take from virtue any, even of its most feeble supports? The Almighty draws men to himself by various ways suited to their capacities; and the soul of the most simple peasant, who is moved to devout affections by objects which strike his imagination, is as precious in the estimation of heaven, as that of the enlightened philosopher and divine, who is capable of the sublimest contemplations.

But to descend now to a few particulars. There are some who find fault with the pomp which is displayed in our solemn celebration of the sacred mysteries. To these I answer, that if in the courts of law and equity, every thing is conducted with that gravity and dignity which may strike the mind with an idea of the importance of the objects there determined and secured, which are the natural and civil rights of men and the
peace

peace and happiness of society; if proper means are taken to inspire respect for those by whom justice is administered; if, in the palaces of the princes of the earth, those forms of approaching the sovereign are established which may give majesty to his person, strike an awe into his subjects, and command their homage; none can rationally blame us, if, when we pay our homage to the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, all that the earth can afford most precious be employed to decorate his temples; if every mark of splendour and dignity be exhibited to show forth his glory and majesty, and impress mortal men with great and awful ideas of that Divine Being, whose reign is *from the beginning, from the days of eternity.*

We adorn our churches and altars with the images and pictures of Christ and his saints, and preserve them with decent and pious care, not only out of respect for the persons they represent, but

But that the sight of their portraits may awaken our remembrance of the virtues which adorned their lives, and excite us to an imitation of them. And do not they who blame this practice, respectfully preserve the portraits of their parents, relations, or friends, or of those who have been any way distinguished in the world, either by fortune or abilities, however infamous their characters in private life? What! then, are the friends of God, and the princes of the court of heaven, less deserving of our attention and respect than the great ones of the earth?

Our veneration for the memory of those whose virtues, we believe, have exalted them to a distinguished place in the kingdom of God, prompts us to preserve their remains, or any thing which formerly belonged to them, and ornament those relics with gold and precious stones; and this also gives offence. But surely, those who disapprove this practice forget that they themselves express

press their regard for their deceased or absent friends, by keeping something which formerly belonged to them, for their sakes; or preserving a part of their hair, and working it up in rings, lockets, or other ornaments. It will not be very easy for them to show that this is not the very same sort of thing.

In entering into our Churches we sprinkle our foreheads with water, which is called holy, on account of the blessings of God which we beg may be bestowed on those who use it. But it is not from the water we expect any good, any blessing, or benefit, beyond its natural uses; but from the prayers which the Minister of God has poured forth before the throne of mercies, that those who use the water, the use of which, as we see in baptism, is an emblem of purity, may be interiorly cleaned by Divine Grace from the defilements of sin, and fitted to appear in the sanctuary of the Holy of Holies.

Again,

Again, on certain days in each week, and at determinate times in the year, we mortify our sensual appetites by fasting, or abstaining from certain kinds of food, which are in general the most relished. On this account we are thought to be superstitious, and by those too whose own liturgy prescribes the very same practices. But we are told, that what enters into the mouth does not defile a man. We know that, I trust, as well as they do. But, if it be the duty of a Christian to keep his affections disengaged from the things of the earth, to restrain his carnal desires, and subject his passions to the dominion of reason and grace, he must be blind indeed in his understanding, who can ridicule those voluntary privations of the use of creatures, those stated fasts and abstinences, which so evidently tend to facilitate those ends.

In a word, ignorance may mislead, or prejudices of education may warp the minds of our opposers. This, however,

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I am confident to assert, that there is no one point of general discipline established by the Catholic Church, but what will appear beneficial and laudable, when examined by the cool and dispassionate eye of rational investigation. I say, of general discipline; for we are not answerable for the practices of every man, or every set of men in our communion, any more than the Clergy of the established Church are answerable for the enthusiastic ravings of an itinerant field preacher. Many amongst us may go too far, may attach too much importance to external practices, or render them ridiculous by their manner of using them. I am an apologist for the institutions, not for the abuse of them, or the excess of attachment to them. Though I am well persuaded, that Almighty God is more honoured by an excess of zeal and simplicity in his servants, than by all the specious refinements of this, which is called the enlightened age, which under pretence of retrenching superfluities, has almost

almost taken away the very substance of religion and virtue.

And now, my brethren, having said thus much in vindication of our discipline, I must beg you to remember, that no instructions given by the Ministers of the Gospel concerning the utility of our religious practices, will ever contribute half so effectually towards removing prejudices from the minds of those who judge unfavourably of our tenets, as your conduct in making use of them. You are to prove to those who behold you by the general tenor of your lives, by the goodness of your hearts, by the practice of every virtue, and by being ever ready to give a proper answer to those who shall make enquiry concerning the observances of your religion, that your piety is enlightened, that your practices are not the fruits of superstition, but the genuine effusions of true devotion, and evidently a *reasonable service*.

For

For this end, with what seriousness and recollection, with what gravity and dignity, should the Ministers of the altar perform their sacred functions! Oh! there should appear in our countenances an impression of holy dread, and awe of the tremendous mysteries we celebrate; the liveliest sense of the presence of that eternal God before whom we stand; all the placid confidence of Hope, and all the ardours of Charity. What injury must indeed be done to the cause of virtue and religion—what irreverences must be occasioned, if we appear at the altar, indifferent, inattentive, dissipated; or proceed with such indecent precipitation, as though we either regarded not, or understood not, the sacred words we are reading, or the important actions we are performing!

And you, my brethren, on your parts must ever remember, that you can place no confidence in any act of exterior worship, unless accompanied by sincere devotion of heart, by conversion from all
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that is evil, and an effectual change of life. It often happens that men seek to substitute certain appearances of piety in the place of the great duties of justice and charity. Unwilling to resign the gains of dishonesty, or relinquish the pleasures of vice, they attempt to make a sort of composition with heaven; a composition, which, though they dare not avow it in words, lurks in secret at the bottom of many a heart. If God would only dispense with some articles of obedience, they will repay him with abundant homage, and hope the number of their prayers will atone for their deficiencies in virtue. But the attempt is vain and impious. *To what purpose do you offer me the multitude of your victims? saith the Lord.—Offer sacrifice no more in vain: incense is an abomination to me. The new moons, and the sabbaths, and other festivals I will not abide; your assemblies are wicked. My soul hateth your new moons, and your solemnities: they are become troublesome to me, I am weary of bearing*

bearing with them. And when you stretch forth your hands, I will turn away mine eyes from you: and when you multiply prayers, I will not hear; for your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, be clean, take away the evil of your devices from mine eyes: cease to do perversely; learn to do well: seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge for the fatherless, defend the widow, and then come. (Isa. ch. 1.) Behold, in the day of your fast, your own will is found; and you exact of all your debtors.—Is this such a fast as I have chosen? for a man to afflict his soul for a day?—Is not this rather the fast that I have chosen. Loose the bands of wickedness.—Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and harbourless into thy house?—Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall speedily arise, and thy justice shall go before thy face, and the glory of the Lord shall gather thee up. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall hear; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. (Ch. lviii.)

Indeed, my brethren, if you are assiduous to adorn and embellish the house of God, while you neglect to decorate your own soul, which is his chosen temple, with the ornaments of grace and sanctity; the Lord rejects your offerings; your gifts profane his altars. If you are zealous to assist regularly at the sacred mysteries, and each solemnity sees you approach to the altar to partake of the mysterious table; and no solemnity beholds any change in your criminal life, any diminution of your vices, any abatement of the impetuosity of your passions; ah! then the only difference between you and the unbeliever is, that you add to his crimes a profanation of all that you hold most sacred and holy. If you recite every day, with scrupulous exactitude, certain prayers in honour of the Saints, and look upon them as a protection for a corrupted and wicked heart; if you pass alternately from those places where God is honoured, to those where he is always offended, your piety

piety is an insult to heaven ; you are but the phantom of a Christian ; you resemble those pompous sepulchres which are decorated on the outside with magnificent and pious emblems, with the figures of Faith, Hope, Justice, and Charity, while all within is rank infection and corruption.

Yes, my friends, true devotion and sanctity of life are ever inseparably united. Prudent and solid virtue fleers a middle course ; it is only passion that runs into extremes. Your religion must neither stop at that speculative kind of virtue which is approved of by the understanding, but excites no tender sentiment in the heart ; nor that blind superstition which is not guided by reason or faith, but spends itself wholly in appearances of piety. Show to mankind the native beauty of virtue, by carefully separating from it all your weaknesses. Then it must appear amiable, sweet, equitable, wise, noble, disinterested, exalted, divine. Let the whole tenor of

your conduct prove to the world, that your devotion is neither weakness nor caprice; but that it leads you to the faithful discharge of every duty; renders you beneficial to your fellow-creatures, and to society; is dictated by that wisdom which descends from heaven, that wisdom which is the brightest ornament and greatest happiness of human life; and at length conducts man to the possession of his sovereign good in a blissful immortality.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE
EPIPHANY.

On the sacred Name of Jesus.

After eight days were accomplished, that the child should be circumcised, his name was called Jesus, which was called by the Angel before he was conceived in the womb. Luke, ii. 21.

PLEASING indeed, and consoling are the ideas which the sacred name Jesus conveys to our minds; sweet are the emotions which it awakens in a Christian heart. With this divine name is connected all that is great, good, and amiable. It is the name of that God, made man, who dwelt amongst us, whose glory we have seen; the glory as of the

only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; who hath delivered us from eternal death, imparted to us the knowledge of salvation, opened to us the gates of heaven, secured to us the possession of immortal bliss. This adorable name represents to our imagination that Redeemer, that Mediator of the New Testament, who, now seated at the right hand of the Most High, continues to shower down upon our souls the treasures of his graces; who nourishes us with his own body; who, with his own blood, washes away all the defilements of our hearts; who forms Pastors and Teachers to conduct us along the paths of truth; who resides in our hearts, assuaging our sorrows, repressing the tumult of our lawless passions, supporting and cheering our souls under the pressure of earthly calamity. *There is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts iv.)* Therefore, the Catholic Church invites all her children, on this day, to praise and glorify

glorify this adorable name *which is above all names*, and to rejoice in the consideration of the blessings which it imports.

You join, no doubt, my brethren, in paying this grateful tribute of praise. You declare, with the sacred Mother of your Redeemer, that your *souls magnify the Lord, and your spirits have exulted in God your Saviour*. But, notwithstanding that much joy is expressed, notwithstanding that lately, when we celebrated the birth of Jesus, the whole Christian world wore throughout an appearance of festivity and joy; yet I cannot be persuaded that the joy which has been manifested was all real. I know not what may have been your feelings on that happy occasion; but it will not be rashness to assert, that the joy of the greater part of men was superficial and vain.

There could be no true joy in the Nativity of Jesus, no peace, but for those who endeavour to live by his spirit, to keep his divine commandments, and to bend their appetites and desires to a

conformity with his will. His sacred name expresses him to be the Saviour of the world. He is so to those who seek salvation: but he is born *for the ruin* as well as *for the resurrection of many.* (Luke ii.) Therefore, that you may discover with all possible certainty whether the name of Jesus is to you a source of comfort or not, I propose this day to consider whence it proceeds, that Jesus, although he be the author of salvation, becomes an occasion of ruin to so many who profess their belief in him, and express their veneration for his adorable name. I will give you a description of the character of those unhappy men; and I beg of the Almighty, that the description which shall be given, may not prove to be the image of any one in this assembly.

In treating this subject, I do not wish to throw a damp on your spirits; but to place your confidence on a solid foundation: for I wish you to taste that joy which springs purely from the heart; as
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the joy which is confined to expressions only, is always empty, and must in the end prove fatal to your happiness. I say therefore, that in the first place, the greater part of men are excluded from that salvation which the name of Jesus announces to the earth, because though they wish to be saved by him, they do not sincerely wish to be delivered by him from their sins. Secondly, because they refuse to seek salvation by employing the means which their Saviour has appointed for attaining it.

I. The eternal word of God descended from his throne of glory, and took upon him human nature, for no other end, but that he might deliver his people from their sins. It is for the accomplishment of this great work, and this alone, that he receives the glorious name of *Jesus* or *Saviour*. Therefore, if he do not free us from the tyranny of our passions; disengage us from our vices; wean us from our evil habits; make us curb and command our corrupt inclinations;

tions; and subject all our actions to the guidance of his law; his name expresses no joy, no peace, no happiness for us.— He brings *peace only to men of good will*: if you, my brethren, are not of that character, reason as you please, this God, who descends on earth to give blessings to man, though the Saviour of the world, is not your Saviour: the appellation is in your regard wholly without meaning; and consequently all the homage which you have this day payed him in his temple, all the pleasure and joy you expressed at the celebration of his Nativity, was outside show and mean hypocrisy.

Thou shalt call his name Jesus, (Mat. 1.) said the Angel to Joseph. Why? Because *he shall save his people from their sins*. Take notice: the Angel does not say you shall call his name Jesus, because he shall shield you from temporal calamities; shall make you abound with earthly riches; shall exalt you to the pinnacle of human greatness; shall fight your battles against visible enemies; shall

shall enlarge your commerce, and secure the prosperity of a temporal kingdom. No: the Saviour, whose name we this day honour, was destined for a more sublime and noble office. The redemption he brings with him is of infinitely greater consequence. The evils he comes to remove are far more dreadful than any misfortunes of the earth; evils and distresses which affect our immortal souls, and consign them to eternal perdition. He is come to purge away our corruption; to confute our errors; to rectify all that is disorderly in our conduct: he is come to free our necks from the yoke of our shameful passions; to subvert that dominion which the Princes of Darknes have established in the world; to cast down and destroy the profane idols, which men have set up in those hearts which were formed for his love, and belong exclusively to him; to root out your pride; to break your criminal attachments; to keep down your vanity; to restrain your intemperance; to give you patience in

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afflictions;

afflictions; to make you cheerful in poverty; to preserve in you a moderate and humble temper of mind in the enjoyments of prosperity; to raise your hearts and desires to heaven, the eternal gates of which he has by his omnipotence and mercy thrown open to receive you. No other power but that of his grace, could destroy those vices which are the bane of all our comforts. He alone could impart to the inhabitants of the earth these invaluable blessings. If therefore he be your Saviour, my brethren, these are the effects he produces in you. Has he already produced them? Have you entered *into the liberty of the children of God*? Does the Lord Jesus reign in your souls? Descend to a minute investigation of your actions. That intemperance and drunkenness to which you once sacrificed your peace and innocence; which, besides consuming the fruits of your industry, depriving your families of that support which they have a just right to look for at your hands,

hands, and undermining your health, has so often laid your heart open to the inroads of every vice; has made it defenceless against every temptation; has caused you to wallow in impurities, and convert the temple of the Holy Ghost into a sink of filth and uncleanness—have you renounced it now? Have you quitted those destructive cups, at the bottom of which every evil lay concealed? Have you bidden an eternal farewell to those companies, those places, which you know have so often subdued your strongest resolutions, triumphed over your weakness, and led your poor soul captive to iniquity? Does a spirit of sobriety and Christian self-denial now preside over your meals? That tongue, which formerly in every heat of passion, and frequently without any provocation, in your ordinary discourse has uttered so many dreadful imprecations, curses, and blasphemies, so many shocking profanations of the adorable name of God—Have you restrained, or do you endeavour to re-
strain

strain its licentious conversation? Do
 reason and religion now move your
 tongue to words of charity and peace,
 to words expressive of reverential awe
 for that Almighty being, on whom you
 totally and continually depend? Those
 injustices in your dealings with other
 men, to which are given so many soft
 names, and which are gilded over with
 such specious pretexts—have you re-
 stored, or do you sincerely wish to re-
 store the fruits of them? and have you
 determined never hereafter to take from
 any fellow creature, by direct or indirect
 means, more than, in the sight of God,
 and before the tribunal of conscience,
 you know you have a title to? Are the
 weaknesses, the defects, and secret crimes
 of their neighbours, still the favourite
 topics of conversation among the female
 part of my audience? Is it still their
 amusement to expose to public view the
 secret shame of their fellow-members in
 Christ Jesus? Are the decoration of the
 exterior, and the cultivation of a perish-
 able

able beauty, still the principal objects of their attention? Do they employ that softness, that delicacy, those persuasive and winning attractions by which nature has given them such an ascendant over the ot . . . ~~tax~~, in engaging them to goodness, in making virtue pleasing and amiable; or in heightening the insidious charms of dissipation, folly, sensuality, and vice?

In a word, see is there any passion which in your heart prevails over the love and fidelity you owe to your Maker; any unlawful desire which you yet cherish in your breasts? If so, what title have you to call Jesus a Saviour? If he be a Saviour, how can you flatter yourselves he is your Saviour? Produce the proofs of your Redemption. What change have you yet suffered him to work in your hearts? Ah, my friends, if you have not yet given him admission to your souls, by renouncing your crimes, I should betray the cause of my great Master, and lull you into a destruc-
tive

tive security. If I mentioned his name to you as a theme of joy. No; I must tell you, however reluctant, I must tell you not to rejoice, but to weep over your condition; since, as long as you remain in these criminal dispositions, the salvation which Jesus brings to the earth will prove the aggravation of your guilt, and the increase of your misfortunes.

II. In the second place; there are many who pretend a desire of salvation, while they will not make use of the necessary means which Jesus hath appointed for the conveyance of that grace which alone can save them. The means requisite for obtaining salvation have been concerted and determined by the wisdom of the Deity; and the principal and most essential are fervent and frequent prayer; the meditation of divine truths, and the frequent participation of the sacraments. By prayer we are to acknowledge our dependance on our Creator, daily to lay before him our wants and miseries,
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and ask for that succour from above, which may arm us against our spiritual enemies, make us proof against the assaults of temptation, and conduct us with steady steps in the ways of goodness. By revolving in our minds the maxims of heavenly wisdom contained in the Gospel, we are to impress them deeply on our remembrance, familiarize ourselves with them, and employ them as a constant antidote against the corrupt maxims and opinions of those who are slaves to this world. As to the third means I mentioned, viz. the participation of the sacraments, you must observe that Jesus, who paid the price of our redemption, having it at his option to convey to us the treasures of his graces by what instruments he should please to appoint, has instituted certain sacred ceremonies called Sacraments, to the use of which his graces are annexed, and through which they flow into our souls. These, therefore, are so many *fountains of water springing up to everlasting life*, provided

provided by our Redeemer for the nourishment and refreshment of his servants in their earthly pilgrimage. Those who draw not from these fountains must languish and faint in the way to happiness, and be carried away captives to iniquity without the power of resistance.

Our Redeemer, as I have already mentioned, could have appointed any other mode of distributing his graces: but he made choice of this, as was explained to you more fully last Sunday, that men, who are more easily moved by objects which strike their senses, than by truths only addressed to the understanding, might have a sensible image of the invisible effects of divine grace in their souls; that the making use of these humble elements might quell the pride of the human heart, and reduce it under entire subjection to the Sovereign Lord of all things visible and invisible; and that the use of such sensible signs might be a band of union between his servants, and cement them together into one visible

sible body, distinguished from every other society or institution among the inhabitants of the earth.

All other ceremonies, besides the Sacraments and the adorable sacrifice of the new law, are of human institution. They impart no grace of themselves; and although they are highly useful and laudable, though wisely calculated to inform the mind and affect the heart, to enkindle devotion and inspire that reverence and awe with which man should approach to pay his adoration to the Supreme Being; yet, when put in competition with the Sacraments, they are but of trifling consequence. Now it is an indisputable truth, that Jesus will not save our souls by any other means than those which he himself has appointed, when our circumstances allow us to have recourse to them.

These truths have been frequently inculcated. All Christians have learned, or should have learned them in their early years. Yet we see thousands, and
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It is most likely there are several among my present hearers, particularly among the lower order of those who are natives of a neighbouring island, that are scrupulously, and perhaps superstitiously attached to certain exterior practices of less moment; such as the use of holy water, the receiving of blessed ashes on their foreheads the first day of Lent; the paying of adoration to their crucified Redeemer, by bending before the image of his cross on Good Friday; the expressing of their respect and veneration for the Saints, by preserving their relics and pictures with decent and pious care; and such-like practices, which were not meant to save their souls, but only to excite their devotion, and move them to employ the means of salvation, the Sacraments which Jesus hath himself instituted. Their attachment to these ceremonies is manifested in such warm expressions of zeal, and accompanied in our public chapels with such extravagant gesticulations, as to draw upon us the
ridicule

ridicule of those who, being unacquainted with our real tenets, and having already imbibed many prejudices against our faith and doctrines, are easily persuaded that we place the whole of our religion in external pomp and show. While, behold these religious and fervent souls, whose appearance speaks them to be all on fire with divine love, though they have our Redeemer present in person upon our altars, the bread of life, the source of grace; though he there stretches out his hands to bestow upon them every blessing; invites them to come to him, assuring them they shall find rest for their souls; intreats them not to be insensible to his goodness, but to purify their hearts from the defilements of sin, by sincere repentance, and frequently nourish their souls with the life-giving food which he hath prepared for them. Still they refuse it; month after month, year after year, they refuse it. They spurn at his goodness; they despise his mercies. What a monstrous inconsistency—

silency—what a dreadful infatuation is this! My God, how terribly is thy vengeance displayed in suffering men to be thus deluded! What think you, my brethren, will all your apparent zeal and devotion avail you? Truly, while you refuse to give to your Redeemer that heart of yours, which he principally regards, all your exterior practices of devotion, however pious and sacred in themselves, can be no better than so many insults and mockeries.

I repeat it again, my brethren, If men wish to be saved, these practices alone will never save them. Salvation is to be obtained by the participation of the Sacraments, by assiduity in prayer and meditation, by keeping the commandments, and by the practice of every good work, with the aid of that grace which, by the two former means, is derived from the merits of Christ Jesus. When you neglect not the great and essential duties of religion, then you may with fruit make use of other observances;

vances ; then you will profit by them ; then they will have some meaning, some signification in you ; then they will nourish your piety : but, if separated from the love of God and the practice of good works, they can avail you nothing.

My friends, I have now pointed out to you the errors which must be guarded against, and the means which must be made use of in order to profit by that salvation, which Jesus brings to the earth. To such as sincerely wish to accomplish his will, the name of Jesus speaks every blessing and every comfort. To repeat it, is their constant delight : it is their solace in their earthly pilgrimage, the alleviation of every pain, a shield against every danger. But, above all, in that tremendous moment, when this world retires away, and the departing spirit has only eternity in view, oh ! then to call on the sweet name of Jesus, is all her consolation ; to hide herself in
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his sacred wounds, is all her security ;
 to look up to his merits and mer-
 cies, is all her joy ; as to sing eternal
 canticles of praise to his divine name,
 will be her happiness for endless ages.

SERMON

H. Aug. 1798

SERMON X.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

On the Evidence and Comforts of Christianity.

*Amen I say to you, I have not found so great
faith in Israel. Mat. viii. 10.*

IT is astonishing, that notwithstanding the fulfilling of the prophecies in our Redeemer, Christ Jesus; notwithstanding the sublimity of his doctrines and the splendor of his miracles; still the Jews were so perverse of heart, as to remain in the darkness of infidelity; to close their eyes with the most obstinate prejudice against that heavenly light which broke in upon them from every side; and after having so long wished and sighed for his coming, who was the

desired of all nations, to deny him their faith, their homage, and submission, and refuse to receive him. *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

(John i.) The Centurion mentioned in this day's Gospel ; the Centurion, a Gentile, an Idolater, little acquainted with the predictions of the Prophets, little conversant in the sacred writings, without the special advantages which the Jews enjoyed, destitute of almost all the means of discovering the Messias, which they possessed, went out to meet his Redeemer with an humble, lively faith ; with a faith which excited the admiration of our divine Lord ; a faith such as he had not yet found among those to whom the promises were made, among the children of Israel, the chosen people of God, and the objects of his peculiar care and protection.

We find equal matter for astonishment, my brethren, in observing the growth

and

and rapid progress of infidelity in these our days. At this period of the world, when the Religion of Jesus, planted in Judea by the eternal word of God, enforced by miracles, supported by prophecies, beautiful in the structure and harmony of all its parts, pure in its morality, beneficial in all its influences, elevated and sublime in its doctrines and precepts, watered by the blood of the Martyrs, made illustrious by the distinguished characters and heroic virtues of thousands, whom it has formed to every thing great and good; when this religion has triumphed over Idolatry, and extended its dominion to the ends of the earth; when Kings, Nations, and Empires have submitted to its power, flourished under its auspices, and gloried in protecting and defending it; at this period of the world, at a time too which is distinguished by the appellation of the enlightened age; men born and educated in the bosom of Christianity, make it their glory to oppose it, to attack it, to

ridicule and laugh it to scorn: to withdraw their assent from its doctrines, and refuse submission to its injunctions, is considered as a becoming use of reason, a mark of courage and strength of mind, a noble freedom of thought.

Various are the principles from which this profession of incredulity in matters of religion is observed to originate. Some oppose Christianity because its moral precepts are adverse to the gratification of their depraved appetites; others, because they have not yet been at any pains to examine the evidence on which it is grounded; others, from a pitiful, contemptible vanity—an affectation to appear more penetrating, more enlightened than the rest of their contemporaries. If, therefore, there be in this assembly any person who, from either of these motives, has unhappily given into this illusion; or if there be any present who, notwithstanding they make profession of the Christian faith, are molested with doubt and perplexity, or disconcerted

certed by the railleries and mockeries of the unbeliever; to such I now address myself, with a design to lay briefly before them some of the irrefragable arguments which demonstrate the religion of Jesus to be the institution of the Divine Being.

First, those who pretend that its doctrines are repugnant to reason, will discover that reason conducts us to the belief of them; that the wisest and most prudent use we can make of our reason, is to become disciples of Christ Jesus. Secondly, if any one think it an advantage to have thrown off the yoke of Christ, he will find that the Christian religion brings with it all that can reflect honor and dignity on human nature, and whatever is consoling and delightful to the heart of man.

To you, likewise, my beloved, whose faith is unmoved and undisturbed, to you the subject is not uninteresting. It must be pleasing and profitable to view, from time to time, the foundations on

which your faith is built; to know the strength of the fortress in which you are secured against the assaults of the infidel and the undermining artifices of a pretended philosophy; and to be *ready always to satisfy every one that asketh you, a reason of that hope which is in you.*

I. I begin by observing to you, that our faith in Christ Jesus, that faith without which *it is impossible to please God*, is not to be acquired by any natural exertions. It is not the result of human wit, invention, or reasoning, but must be infused into the soul by the Spirit of God, must be the special gift of him who is the *giver of all good gifts*. But, although our faith is not the production of human reason, though the mysteries it teaches are impenetrable to our weak and imperfect minds, yet it is the office of reason to remove every obstacle which might prevent us from embracing it. Reason guides us to faith. The fainter rays of the light of nature point out the path which leads to the bright and steady light

light of divine revelation: as faith itself will at length terminate in a still clearer sight and knowledge of the truths of God, in those blessed abodes where all that is imperfect will be done away; where the glory of the Lord shall shine around us in all its effulgence, and the Deity shall disclose himself to our view, without veil or any shade of obscurity. Thus hath heaven ordained, that man should pass progressively through different stages of mental improvement, till he arrive at the fullness of all wisdom and knowledge.

In defending Revelation, I wish not to depreciate human reason, much less to establish Christianity on its ruins. Reason is the most beautiful ornament of our nature, the distinguishing excellence of our being. We were gifted with it by our bountiful Creator, that by its light we might direct our steps through life, and determine the part we should act with respect to all the concerns of this world; and particularly those most

important of all concerns, the goods and evils of eternity. Hence St. Paul tells the Romans, that their submission to the law of Christ must be *reasonable*. Indeed, were the doctrines which are delivered as revealed truths demonstratively repugnant to reason, we should be bound to reject them ; because the Deity is incapable of acting in contradiction with himself. He is the author of reason; therefore that which is contrary to reason cannot have been revealed by him.

Christianity, however, has nothing to apprehend from being examined by the principles of solid and dispassionate reason. Truth always loves the light, loves to be narrowly searched into ; while it is the property of error and falsehood to screen itself in darkness and obscurity. In order to be convinced of this harmony between reason and revelation, we will suppose, for a moment, that we have not yet embraced Christianity, and then observe by what gradual advances reason conducts us to the religion

gion of Christ Jesus; and I trust we shall be fully assured, that not to embrace it in faith and practice, evinces either a weakness of intellect, or a depravity of heart.

In the first place, reason clearly demonstrates the existence of a God, a supreme ruler of the Universe, a sovereign Lord of Heaven and Earth who drew us, and all things out of nothing, by his omnipotent word. Since, therefore, we are his own creatures, the work of his hands, we depend entirely on him, and owe to him, by every title of justice and gratitude, our obedience, fidelity, and homage. We are bound consequently to honor and serve him, after every manner in which he choseth to be honored and served. Now, as the infinite wisdom of the Supreme Being may doubtless be acquainted with many mysterious truths, which are far beyond the reach and comprehension of our limited and narrow capacities; if he command us to make him a sacrifice of our under-

standings by embracing these truths, although we cannot comprehend them; this is a kind of homage which we are bound to pay to his adorable Majesty. In like manner, If the Almighty demand of us the sacrifice of our affections, by enjoining the practice of virtues repugnant to our natural inclinations, and painful to the feelings of flesh and blood; if he require of us, that we worship him after any determinate mode or rite, by sacrifices by public prayer, by fasting, or making use of certain exterior ceremonies and forms; we are indispensably obliged to comply with his divine injunctions. From these observations it evidently follows, that if the doctrines of the Christian Religion were revealed and its precepts dictated by the Almighty, to refuse to submit to them is the height of insolence and impiety. The next point then to be determined is, whether the Christian Religion has been thus revealed and thus instituted? Here let reason still be our guide: following

following its direction we shall infallibly be conducted to Christ.

The history of the life of Jesus Christ contained in the four Gospels, and the other writings and epistles of his Disciples, which compose the New Testament, (for at present I shall not mention the Scriptures under the Mosaic dispensation) have been carefully preserved and from age to age transmitted down to us. We cannot rationally doubt whether these books were really written by the Apostles and Disciples of Jesus Christ, to whom they are ascribed, any more than we can doubt whether the works attributed to Homer, Virgil, or Cicero, be their compositions. Nay, we are much farther removed from doubt respecting the real authors of the Scriptures, because these books have been more studied, more narrowly and critically examined, and more universally propagated, than any other writings or productions whatever.

The scriptures, as to all the facts they relate, carry with them every mark of truth: for the Authors of them could not have been themselves imposed on; nor have we the least ground to suspect them of any design to impose on us. They could not have been themselves imposed on: they wrote a narrative of transactions of which themselves were eye-witnesses: plain, obvious, sensible facts, of which the meanest capacity is as capable of judging, as the most cultivated understanding. They did not wish to impose on us. Oh! my brethren, what interest could they have in that? They wrote and they preached a doctrine which, instead of being calculated to procure them any of the emoluments of this world; to raise them to honours and dignities; to gain them the smiles of the great, the applause of their contemporaries; or to lay open the path to wealth and enjoyment; was *a scandal to the Jews, and a folly to the Gentiles*: They were despised and ridiculed by the philo-

philosophers, and cruelly persecuted by their own people ; yet they persevered in abjection, in infamy, in peril, in distress, in prison, in tortures ; they against the world still persevered, and ended a life of toil and affliction, by sealing with their own blood the *veracity* of the facts they related. Does imposture and deceit ever go these lengths ? The suspicion is absurd and ridiculous.

These writings, then, composed by witnesses so credible, by witnesses above all exception, contain the most irresistible proofs, that the doctrines of Jesus descended from Heaven, that his Religion is the institution of divine wisdom : for they inform us, that Jesus worked various miracles in confirmation of his mission ; that is, to prove that he came with the power and authority of God, and to prove that he was himself the Son of God. A miracle, my brethren, is a change of the laws of nature, an interruption or suspension of its operations ; a deviation from the natural order and course

course of things, which was established by the Deity at the creation of the world. God is the author of nature and of all its laws: therefore, none can change them without his pleasure or permission. God is essentially truth and holiness: he cannot, consequently, permit any one to change the laws of nature in confirmation of falsehood, because that would give his sanction to the deceit. The Creator of the Universe can never descend from his throne or abdicate his sovereign dominion over nature: nor will he delegate to any man the power of suspending the course of nature, when the exercise of that power will betray his creatures into error inevitable.

When Jesus, therefore, without employing any of the expedients of human art, commanded the sick to feel no more their infirmities and pains, to resume their health and vigor, to take up their beds, and return to their dwellings; when he commanded the dead to arise from their graves, and was instantly obeyed;

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it must have been the power of God which was there exerted. These stupendous prodigies made it evident to mankind, that he, at whose word they were performed, was the interpreter of the Divine will; that his instructions were the dictates of God's eternal wisdom; and that all men were bound to acknowledge him for their law-giver, their master, their teacher, their Lord, to bow down their understandings in humble assent to the impenetrable truths which he delivered, and form their lives by the maxims and rules which he established.

What I have already said may suffice to show you, that your faith and religion are supported by pillars so strong and durable, that no force or art can ever move them from their basis; and to point out to you the gradual progress of the human mind, from the glimmering light of reason, to the brighter day of divine revelation. Would time permit it, I could lay before you many other striking
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and irresistible arguments, which demonstrate the divine origin of the religion of Christ Jesus. I could show you the completion of all the prophecies in his person: I could call your attention to the miraculous propagation of this religion, the establishment of the Church, and its preservation to this day, during a term of almost eighteen hundred years, in the midst of the various revolutions of the earth, and notwithstanding the fluctuating condition of all human things.— Indeed, when we behold a few illiterate fishermen, without arts, without science, without eloquence, authority or power, preaching a doctrine humiliating to human nature, and enjoining the practice of virtues painful to the feelings of flesh and blood; and yet, though all the force of the Roman Empire was collected against them succeeding in their design; giving conviction to the proudest minds; subduing the most obstinate prejudices; silencing the eloquence of the orators; confounding the wisdom of the Philosophers:

phers: when we consider the nature of the doctrines they preached, so pure, so beneficial in their influence, so exalted, so sublime, so far transcending, all the moral precepts of the most distinguished among the sages of the ancient world; when we behold the church of Christ, at this remote period of time, when so many kingdoms and empires have fallen to ruin, and disappeared one after another, still flourishing and glorious; when we see it even increasing from opposition, and rising still more splendid from the clouds, which seemed to overshadow its glory: when we behold all this, can we forbear crying out, *Truly the finger of God is here!* This is indeed the work of an Almighty Hand! the work of that Being, who promised to give to his son Christ Jesus the nations for his inheritance, and for his possessions the ends of the earth! Oh, my friends, when we consider with dispassionate reflection, the proofs on which our faith is grounded; we feel that it is
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all our joy, our glory, our happiness, to submit our minds and hearts to the dominion of Jesus.

I said, with dispassionate reflection; for, would you know whence it generally happens, that men see not the truth of the Christian Religion, or seeing, refuse to embrace it? Their passions are the great, the only obstacle. Infidelity originates in the heart. The Royal Prophet tells us, that *the wicked man said in his heart there is no God*: that is; first, he wished there were none; and then endeavoured to persuade himself and others, that his wishes were realized. The same is the case of every unbeliever in matters of religion: he finds himself agitated by criminal passions and desires; he pants eagerly after those gratifications and enjoyments, which are incompatible with virtue. But, when Vice first discovers her horrid aspect, his conscience starts back; the principles of religion are a continual check to him in his guilty career; painful monitors, whose importunity

tunity tortures his soul; remorse haunts him like a dismal spectre; every pleasure is thus embittered, and succeeded by excruciating pain of heart. What then shall he do, in this distressful situation? how gratify his unlawful desires, without feeling this interior anguish? Why he endeavour to persuade himself that Religion is but a fable: he blunts the fine edge of his mind, and can no longer be worked upon by the force of truths, which, were his passions silent, could not fail of carrying conviction to his very soul.

For our parts, my brethren, if we sincerely wish to be acquainted with truth, however adverse to our unjust interests, or sensual pleasures; if we really desire to know and to do the will of God in all things, and not to follow the impulse of our own corruption; if we study to become more and more acquainted with the doctrines of religion; if, by daily meditation, we listen to the voice of God, speaking secretly to our hearts;

hearts; if, with humble supplication, we beg of him who can command the seas no longer to roll, and the howling tempest to be hushed into a silent calm; if we beg, and daily beg of him to check the torrent of our passions, to hold absolute dominion over our souls, to dispel every cloud of error and deceit; then the poison of infidelity, however fatal its effects in this age, will have no power to infect our minds or hearts; it will never taint our virtue, nor disturb our peace.—But it is now time to come to the second point, and shew you the dignity to which Christianity exalts human nature, and the comforts it imparts.

II. The dignity of a Christian, whether we judge of it from the estimation in which he is held by the Supreme judge of merit; or from the superiority to which he is exalted above all distinctions of this world; is, indisputably, the greatest that can be conferred on any created being. Since God is the fountain of all honour and greatness, the
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excellencies of created beings are so many emanations from him. His creatures are great and excellent, in proportion as they stand in a nearer relation to him. Hence it follows, that to be made his friends, his associates, the objects of his esteem and of his tenderest love, is the most exalted degree of dignity and excellence to which a finite and imperfect being is capable of arriving. And these distinctions Christianity confers. A Christian is the friend, the favourite, the adopted son of God, heir of God, and coheir with Jesus Christ, to whose dominion *all principality, and power, and virtue, and domination, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come,* are eternally subjected. (Eph. i.)

With relation to the things of this world, a true Christian is a man raised above the earth; no longer agitated by the little revolutions and vicissitudes of human things; no longer to be dejected by the frowns of adversity, or transported beyond

beyond the bounds of moderation by the smiles of prosperity: his treasure, and all that he loves, is in heaven, where no fraud or violence can enter. He is free, even in captivity and chains; ever master of himself; ever possessed of absolute sway over all the passions of his own heart: he does good actions, not catching at human applause, but to approve himself to his Creator; he does good actions with equal alacrity, in the obscurity of retirement, and when exposed to the notice of his fellow-creatures: but he wishes rather for the retired shade, because he fears lest the breath of human applause should tarnish his virtues; and well knows that his Lord views with delight every deed of goodness, how much soever despised, disregarded, or forgotten, by the giddy and thoughtless inhabitants of the earth. He fears not death: death appears to him disarmed of all its terrors. Why should he fear it? It is the gate which opens

opens into everlasting life. He rejoices in the hope that the period which puts an end to his mortal existence, will be the moment in which he is introduced to the society of all that is beautiful, wise, and happy. This is true greatness; this is nobility; this is dignity indeed! Oh, my friends, I glory in believing truths thus honourable to my nature. It is delightful to indulge these hopes. Not to believe, would be a misery, and a torment.

The infidel who, from a false affectation of independence, refuses to submit to the empire of Christ, suffers himself to be enslaved by every lawless desire: he is the sport of every contingency, without any greater expectation than that of ending a life of vanity, trouble and toil, like the beasts of the field: he seeks to withdraw himself from the dominion of God, but he cannot succeed. The Lord must reign for ever and ever over all his creatures: he wishes to rule mankind.

mankind with a sceptre of mildness, goodness, and love; to be to them as the good shepherd, and lead them into fruitful, rich, and delightful pastures: but if they reject the offers of his bounty, he will still rule over them; he will *rule them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.* (Psal. ii.) Such is the end of human pride; such the glory of those who dare to resist the will of the Almighty.

The Christian Religion, which points out the only path that leads to glory, furnishes likewise the most fruitful source of consolation under all the disappointments, crosses and afflictions of this mortal life. Without the friendly aid which religion offers, man is truly a miserable, a wretched being: his infant days are ushered in by sorrow and pain: his youth is a scene of levity, folly, and inconstancy: in his more advanced years, he is harrassed by cares, solitudes, perplexities; agitated by a variety of tumultuous passions; crossed in his pursuits

suits by a thousand disappointments ; grasping still after a phantom of happiness, which, as he makes advances towards it, constantly retires from him ; and if he even attain to the object of his desires, his heart still returns back to itself, and finds a void not yet filled up, a variety of other desires not yet satiated. Thus he goes on from year to year, sometimes rejoicing, but oftener, much oftener, weeping and sorrowing, till death, which of all evils he most dreads, comes rushing upon him, and extinguishes all his flattering hopes and delusive expectations. This is a true picture of the natural condition of man : this is what he would have been had not Revelation disclosed to him the truths of Christianity, introduced him to objects divine and immortal, and raised his views to grand and noble prospects, by bringing life and immortality to light.

But now, walking by the light which Revelation holds out to him, in all the evils of life, in sorrow, sickness and pain,

he looks up to heaven and is comforted. A thousand casualties may deprive him of the goods of the earth; but of these he makes no very great account. He knows there is a blissful inheritance in a better life, which none can take from him; which is his, as long as he chooses to retain his title to it. Elate with these pleasing reflexions, big with these comfortable hopes, he feels not the weight of his earthly chains: he rejoices to suffer here, because his *present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for him above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.* (2 Cor. iv.)

Henceforth, therefore, my brethren, let your vocation to Christianity, your having been born and educated in its bosom and nourished by its divine instructions, be considered as the greatest blessing of your lives. But remember, that it is no blessing to those who content themselves only with the profession of Christianity, without showing forth in their lives the virtues it commands and
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recommends. No: if you wish to enjoy the blessings which Religion brings with it to mankind, begin from this moment to walk in a manner worthy of your vocation: let humility, meekness, patience, an ardent love of God, and a benevolent attention to the interests of every fellow-creature, be your particular character as they are the distinguishing features of every true disciple of Christ Jesus. These are the ornaments of a Christian; these are ever attended by peace and joy, and lead to a death precious in the sight of God.

When I mentioned a death precious in the sight of God, I saw in the dejected air of your countenances, that I awakened in your minds the sorrowful remembrance of that truly great and illustrious Prelate of the Church, Dr. Challoner, whom the Almighty has been lately pleased to remove from this earthly scene: In losing him we have indeed suffered a loss, which claims the sad tribute of all our sighs and tears; a loss which can

never be sufficiently lamented. Who but must deplore that melancholy event, which has deprived the world of a living model of every virtue that could exalt the man, or dignify the Christian? A steady, uniform, fervent piety; a benevolence and charity, which the groans and tears of the distressed, of the widow and the orphan, proclaim more eloquently than any words can attempt; all the treasures of science, decorated with all the beautiful ornaments of humility, sweetness, and modesty. But we may still be comforted. We have not lost the bright example of his virtues; they will not be forgotten; they will be held up to the admiration of succeeding ages. We have still many precious monuments of his wisdom and sanctity, in writings, glowing, as it were, with the flames of divine love, reflected images of the soul of their author. We shall not be deprived of his charitable aid. No; the father will not forget his children, to whose interests he devoted a long

long life of solicitude and toil ; he will look down on his flock from the realms above, and use his interest at the throne of God that we may be permitted to follow our shepherd into the pastures of never-ending delight and peace.

SERMON XI.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE
EPIPHANY.

On the Civil Duties of a Christian.

*If there be any other commandment, it is
comprised in this word, Thou shalt love
thy neighbour as thyself.——Love there-
fore is the fulfilling of the law. Rom.
xiii. 9.*

THE wisdom of this world is very apt
to distinguish the interests of society from
those of religion; it frequently incul-
cates that a rigorous adherence to the
laws of the Gospel is not compatible
with the maxims of sound policy; and
pretends that the wheels of government
would be very languid in their motions,
if the management of them were entrusted

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ed to the hands of devotion and piety. Many modern Deists have advanced, that Christianity is incapable of forming good citizens; that its injunctions are calculated to extinguish the social virtues and affections; that it damps the courage of the brave, represses the efforts of genius, contracts the hearts of its votaries, and, by raising men's expectations to a future world, renders them totally indifferent to all the concerns and the interests of this. They are fond of representing Religion as a cruel superstition, that holds poor trembling mortals in chains at its feet, continually perplexing their minds, and tormenting their hearts with doubts and fears.

My brethren, this character of Religion is false and injurious; it is drawn with the darkest colouring of ignorance or malice. Were Religion accurately and justly delineated before you, you would indeed behold a most beautiful picture: you would see her descending from heaven, leaning on Divine Faith,

and, while she leaves behind her those clouds of majestic darkness which withhold from our sight the sanctuary of the eternal God, shedding on the earth a ray of heavenly wisdom, which discovers to man every useful truth, and exhibits to his view all the native beauties of virtue; and pointing at the same time to the bright abodes of immortal bliss, she cheers him up when surrounded by earthly calamities, and by the animating prospect of future happiness, powerfully moves him to the faithful discharge of every duty which he owes either to God, or to his fellow-creatures.

Such is the genius of the Christian Religion, as represented by St. Paul, in the chapter from whence my text is taken. In it the Apostle, after having enjoined the principal duties of a citizen and a subject, and the chief virtues by which society is held together, and made peaceable and happy; after having exhorted every soul to *be subject to higher powers; because there is no power but*
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from God, and to be subject for conscience sake; to pay tribute; to render to all men their dues; tribute, to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour, to whom honour; briefly comprehends all these duties in the great precept of charity, the leading principle of Christianity. Owe no man any thing, says he, but to love one another.——Love is the fulfilling of the law.

In order therefore to vindicate Religion from the aspersions thrown on it by its enemies, when they consider it in a social view, and as to its effects in the formation of citizens and subjects, I mean this day to dwell a little on these ideas of the Apostle, and to show you the great benefits which are derived to civil society from the precepts of Christian morality. In the first place, we will consider the influence of Christianity in promoting the peace of states and empires, by subjecting all its votaries to an orderly submission to the civil power. Secondly; how evidently it tends to in-

spire men with that love of their own country, in particular, which has ever been the peculiar characteristic of great and exalted minds.

While I undertake to show you, that the Gospel forms good citizens, I may perhaps be blamed by some people, for confining my attention to a subject, which to them may appear not altogether suited either to this place of religious worship, or to the sacred character with which I am invested. I can only make for answer, that if by my endeavours one individual be made better acquainted with his civil duties, more obedient to the laws, or more zealous in promoting the interests of his country, my ministry will not be fruitless, nor without its value in the sight of God.

I. In the first place; submission and obedience to the civil power are enforced by the commandment of loving God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves, which is the first and greatest commandment, and the fundamental

principle of Christian morality. The truth of this assertion appears in fullest evidence, when we consider, that our belief of the existence of a Supreme Being, the sense of our dependance on him, and of our obligation of obeying his laws, is the principal foundation of every political union among men. It has been demonstrated, against Hobbes, Spinoza, and others, that, in a republic of Atheists, the civil magistrate and the laws could never possess any real authority; because *authority*, properly speaking, is not only a power of compelling men to obedience by force and violence, but of commanding them in such a manner, as to induce an obligation to obedience, without employing any coercive measures; an obligation to obedience in secret, as well as in public, and without any view either to temporal punishments or rewards. It supposes, therefore, that the subject be influenced by conscientious motives; by a submission to a higher, though invisible power, which

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takes cognizance of human actions, is privy to every latent conception of the mind, and moves to goodness by holding out rewards which it is not in the power of man to bestow, and employing menaces which human ability cannot execute: whereas, without our belief of the existence of the Deity, and a sense of our obligation of submitting to his will, there could be no civil authority upon earth; right and wrong could then be determined only by force; he that could violate the laws with impunity, could do it also without injustice—consequences which must soon render this habitable globe a shocking scene of anarchy, riot, rapine, and bloodshed.

Happily therefore for mankind, the doctrines of divine Revelation have furnished the strongest motives for our submission and allegiance to civil authority by declaring that such obedience is an act of homage to our adorable Creator. *By me kings reign*, saith the spirit of God by the mouth of the Wise Man; *by me kings reign,*

reign, and law-givers decree just things. By me princes rule, and the mighty decree justice. (Prov. viii.) Let every soul, says St. Paul, be subject to higher powers; for there is no power but from God; and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation. (Rom. xiii.) And St. Peter, in his first epistle. Be ye subject to every human creature, (*κρίσει* constitution) for God's sake; whether it be to the King, as excelling, or to governors, as sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of the good.

To this peaceful and obedient spirit, so beneficial to human kind, the Apostles and first Disciples were formed by their divine master, Christ Jesus. He, ever faithful, ever affectionately attached to his ungrateful country, recommended to all his followers the same generous dispositions. He willed them to pay tribute to the reigning Emperor, whose
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image was stamped on the public coin; to respect the laws; to oppose only sweetness and meekness to all the violence of the most cruel tyrants. Observe too, my brethren, that no difference of religious persuasions can ever invalidate this obligation to civil allegiance and subjection: the prince to whom our divine Lord would have tribute paid, was an idolator: Nero, to whom St. Peter and St. Paul enjoined submission, was an impious and cruel tyrant. In the midst of the most excruciating tortures, the first Christians ceased not to pray for those Emperors, by whom they were so cruelly treated. "Yes, said their eloquent Apologist, take away from Christians that life which is employed in supplications for the safety of the Emperor." And in another place, "A Christian, says he, is no man's enemy, much less the enemy of the Emperor. Him he knows to have been appointed by the Deity; and therefore must love, reverence, and honour him, and wish for his prosperity,

“ perity, with that of the whole Roman
 “ Empire, as long as time shall continue
 “ to run.— We venerate the Emperor,
 “ as next in dignity to the Supreme
 “ Being.” (Tert. l. ad Scap. c. ii.)

In this manner did the Apostles and their disciples ever consider the temporal and ecclesiastical powers, as entirely distinct, and mutually independent of each other; insomuch that no difference in religion; no persecution raised against those who dissented from the established religion of the State could ever authorise sedition. To the violence of their enemies they opposed reasons, not force: they sought redress from their Sovereign, by the mild and legal method of petitions and supplications; they defended what they believed to be truth; but their language was so respectful, so remote from any thing bordering on sedition, that we cannot read it without conceiving the highest admiration of their patience and meekness.

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The theocratical government is no longer blended with the civil and political, as it was in the Mosaic dispensation. The kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world: he leaves to the princes of the earth, whether they be his disciples and servants or not, their temporal dominion with all its rights. He does more: he consecrates, without any regard to their religion, both their person and their authority: he commands his disciples ever to cherish the most inviolable respect both for the one and the other: he keeps no troops in his pay for the subduing of infidel nations with fire and sword; he will have no subjects but such as voluntarily yield to his dominion; and menaces those who knowingly and deliberately rebel against him, with punishments, which are either reserved for a future life, or confined in this life to effects which are purely spiritual.

Would to God, my brethren, that Christians, in each succeeding age, had never departed from these equitable prin-

principles ! But, alas ! it must be acknowledged, that very often ambition has covered itself with the broad mantle of Religion, and, under pretext of defending the interests of heaven, has violated all the natural rights of men, has blown up the flames of rebellion, and plunged the poignard into the heart of a brother, a fellow-citizen, and a sovereign. But the religion of Jesus was never the parent of these enormities ; Religion inspires us with detestation for them, and weeps over the calamities which misguided zeal, blind fanaticism, or disguised lust for power, has brought upon the world. In the midst of all these disorders, Religion raised her friendly voice, and said to the deluded multitude, Whither are you hurrying with blind fury and madness ? You are not to follow the standard of rebellion, to be seduced by the cabals of the ambitious, or the artifices of the hypocrite. You are the disciples of a Master who loved his own nation, who shed tears over its ruins, who gave the brightest

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examples of fidelity to Princes, who feared not to irritate the malice of the Pharisees, by defending the rights of Cæsar: *Render, said he, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.* (Mat. xxii.) He commands you to love your country, to honour its sovereign. I saith he, have put a sceptre into his hands, and invested him with majesty: he is my image, and I am his avenger.

While I thus endeavour to confirm you in your allegiance to the reigning power, it is not my intention to enter into the province of Civilians, by determining the immediate origin of that right of governing with which the Supreme Magistrate is invested; nor should any thing I have advanced concerning the obedience due to Princes, as holding the place of God, be construed into a support of that opinion, which gives to Kings a divine indefeisible right. I examine not in this place, nor do I indeed know whether they can have any right which is not ultimately derived from

from the suffrages or acquiescence of a free people. Independently of every particular system, the obedience to which I exhort you is of strict obligation: for, certain it is, that since the natural condition and exigencies of men lead them to a social and political union, and this union cannot be maintained without due subordination, such subordination must be the appointment and decree of that Being who is the author of nature, and of nature's laws: *Therefore he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.*

Guided by these principles, my brethren, if heretofore, at a time when when men's minds were imposed upon by an erroneous conception of an hereditary, indefeasible right; when a line of discrimination between civil and religious duties was, in the heat of contest, and in the tumult of the passions, less accurately drawn; if then an unhappy attachment to a proscribed family engaged some of your forefathers in a cause ruinous to themselves, and pregnant with
many

many evils to their posterity : now, that the avowed consent of all that are great and wise in this nation, and the acquiescence of the whole community, have made it evident to whom the right of governing belongs; now, that we have confirmed our professions of allegiance to the illustrious House of Hanover, by the most solemn appeals to heaven, abjuring every obedience to any foreign power, either civil or ecclesiastical, as far as it may interfere with the temporal government of these realms; continue to sit down content and happy under the mild and equitable government of the best of Princes. Let your loyalty be conspicuous among your fellow-citizens: let no restraints which the Legislature has judged it expedient to lay upon you, on account of your dissenting from the established religion of this country, in any degree abate your ardour and zeal for its peace and prosperity : be ever ready to exert yourselves, if called upon, in defending, with your blood, that wise and equitable

equitable constitution, which your ancestors, men of the same religion with yourselves, first founded, maintained with their swords, and have delivered to their posterity as their most precious inheritance.

II. The maxims of the Gospel not only give stability to civil governments, and secure the tranquility of monarchies and republics, by enforcing the submission of the subject with the most powerful of all motives, the solemn obligation of conscience; but also, by nourishing in men's hearts a love for their country, that *charitas patrii soli*, which has ever been an incentive to great and heroic actions. Its injunctions on that head are clear and positive, and their influences most beneficial. By the laws of the Gospel, all men are to be considered as friends and brothers. All are children of God; all are redeemed by the blood of Jesus; all have one common origin, and tend to the same last end; therefore all must be united together by the closest bands

bands of fraternal love. This dear relation in which we stand to each other, forms the most indissoluble of all unions. All men must be loved in and for Jesus: *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.* The difference of education, habits, or religious opinions, must never loosen this natural tie, or check this innate impulse of humanity. As men, we must be interested in all that concerns mankind. The priest, who, beholding the wounded traveller, passed cruelly by, and give him no relief, is condemned by the Saviour of the world: the good Samaritan, who, though separated from the society of God's people, was touched with commiseration at the sight of distress in a fellow-creature, and hastened to his aid, merited the highest praises from our divine Redeemer. Mutual love is to be the distinguishing character of all the children of our eternal Father in heaven. But, as it is not in our power to do good alike to all men, our benevolence must consequently be first expanded to those
with

with whom our situation and circumstances have particularly united us in one society: and this principle determines the duties of a Christian in civil life.

Hence the land in which men dwell together, becomes a new and strong band of union between them. They consider it as their common mother; they cling more closely to each other; their hearts glow with more warmth of affection for their own countrymen; they are more zealous to promote their interests, from the reflection that the same earth which nourishes them with its fruits during life, will receive them into its bosom, when the departed spirit shall have made its way to the regions of eternity. The patriarch Joseph was consoled by the expectation that his bones would be interred in the land of his fellow-citizens. *After my death*, saith he to his brethren, when he was just expiring, *after my death God will visit you, and will cause you to go up from this land to the land which he swore*

to

to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.....Take with you my bones from this place. (Gen. l.)

These patriotic sentiments have ever animated the heroes among God's chosen people. *Wo is me!* said the venerable Matathias, *wherefore was I born to see the ruin of my people and the ruin of the holy city, and to dwell there when it is given into the hands of the enemies?...The vessels of her glory are carried away captive: her old men are murdered in the streets, and her young men are fallen by the sword of the enemies.....To what end then should we live any longer?* (1 Mac. ii.) *Gird yourselves,* said Judas Machabeus, *and be valiant men.....For it is better for us to die in battle, than to see the evils of our nation.* (Ibid. ch. iii.)

The Jewish people, who could taste no comfort on the fertile banks of the rivers of Babylon, were far from adopting the maxims of that frigid philosophy, which aims at extinguishing the natural affections, which makes men talk of being citizens of the world at large,
acknowledge

acknowledge no attachment to any country in particular, and boast of universal benevolence, while they make that boast a pretext for dispensing with themselves from doing any good, where alone they can do it, that is, among those who are within the circle in which they move. No; *their* hearts were susceptible of no joy while they were kept at a distance from Jerusalem. They hung their harps upon the willows, and sat pensive and weeping. *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten. (Ps. cxxx.) Thou, Lord, shalt arise, and have mercy on Sion; for it is time to have mercy on it, for the time is come. For the stones thereof have pleased thy servants; and they shall have pity on the earth thereof. (Ibid. ci.)* Its very ruins have more charms for them than the superb edifices of a strange country: their native land, in its most desolated state, is yet the dearest object of their tenderness and love.

Let these generous sentiments ever actuate your breasts. The Almighty

hath done great things for you : he hath placed you in a land which his providence hath made to abound with all that is necessary, useful, and ornamental to human life, and under a government in which the legislative power is wisely committed to the hands of persons so happily distinguished, that there is no part of the people which has not a common interest with, at least, one part of the legislature ; and consequently the boundless licentiousness of despotic tyranny can never rage. Ah ! how much would your attachment to your country be naturally increased ! how much more spontaneously would these patriotic feelings arise in our breasts, were we but admitted to an equal participation of the rights of our fellow citizens, or at least, placed on an equality with others who dissent from the established religion ! But, be not disheartened, my brethren ; a gleam of hope appears. The day, I trust, is not far distant, when the dark clouds of prejudice will no longer overshadow

shadow this land; when civil and religious liberty will walk hand in hand together; when the light of truth and reason will show, that to persecute men for conscience sake, is both impolitic and inhuman. Already that light has diffused itself over the minds of the more discerning part of our fellow-citizens. Doubt not, but sure, though gradual in its progress, it will at length make its way among those who, at present, seem the least susceptible of it.

Still, be the event what it may, let your love of God and of your neighbour give that vigor to your patriotism, which you do not derive from any temporal encouragements; make yourselves useful members of society: do good to all around you. You are disciples of Jesus, the Prince of peace, his doctrines breathe no other spirit but that of sweetness, peace, and charity. He wills you to love all men without distinction, as your brothers, even your most declared enemies, and to return them good for evil.

evil. Friends and Enemies, Infidels and Christians, Catholics and Protestants, all are your brothers. We must cherish their persons and seek their good, while we guard against any temptation to close in with, what we believe to be, the errors of their religious creed. It would be a diabolical illusion to imagine, that the interests of your religion can ever be a just ground for persecuting or doing evil to any one, or in any degree.

I shall be told, that these pacific and benevolent doctrines have not always been followed in the Christian world, and by many persons in that communion of which I profess myself a member. I acknowledge it, my brethren, and lament it exceedingly. But, without stopping here to enter into a discussion of all the particular circumstances of those religious persecutions and wars, which our adversaries so much exaggerate and paint in such hideous colours; it is sufficient to answer, that the rule of our conduct is not to be drawn from
any

any particular facts, or from the proceedings of any individuals, however exalted in church or state; but from the maxims of the Gospel, and the genuine uncorrupted doctrines of the Catholic Church, who never, in any of her authentic decisions, has been known to depart from the meek and gentle spirit of her divine Founder. It is uncandid, it is illiberal in the extreme, to attribute to any religion those excesses which it loudly condemns, or of which the passions of men have made it the innocent occasion. Were I disposed to imitate a conduct so ungenerous, I might find much to retort against our Protestant brethren; but it is much more becoming to draw a veil over those enormities which we should both lament, than to describe them, and declaim and rail about them to our mutual disunion and disedification.

For your parts, my beloved, lay aside all animosity and contention; be an example of moderation to all around

you; and since the legislature has bestowed on you a partial alleviation from the hardships under which you have long laboured, prove yourselves deserving of further indulgence, by your pacific disposition, by your gratitude, by your attachment to the constitution, and your fidelity and loyalty to your Sovereign.

As to future expectations, if they be frustrated, still console yourselves by the reflection, that for those rewards which man may refuse to bestow, you will be abundantly compensated by the unerring Judge of merit.

From this short view of the influence of the Christian religion on civil society, you will learn to despise the declamations of those who pretend that piety is any obstacle to the happiness and prosperity of kingdoms; or, that it disqualifies men for the discharge of social duties; spends itself in minute practices, and is continually lifting up to heaven those hands which should be employed in relieving the unfortunate. These weaknesses are

not

not the work of religion, but the abuse of it. It is true, religion does teach us to turn our eyes continually towards the joys and glories of heaven; but it teaches at the same time, that those joys and glories are to be the recompense of our charitable deeds upon earth. It commands us to love whatever we love, in and for Jesus. But do we love men less tenderly, because we love them in God? When we consider suffering humanity as bearing the image of Christ Jesus, is not our commiseration more strongly excited on that very account? Yes, my brethren; only the benevolent hand, which wipes away the tear from the eye of misery, can open for us the gates of the heavenly paradise. Wo to that man, who, when he retires from the tumults of the world, becomes insensible to the distress of his fellow-creatures, because he takes no part in their false joys! *He, saith St. John, that has the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels*

bowels from him; how doth the charity of God abide in him? (1 J. iii.) Neither is it sufficient to deplore the misfortunes of others; we must give them succour. It is not enough to rejoice at the success with which merit is crowned; we are bound to seek it out, bring it forward, and give it our support. It is not enough to abstain from doing any injury to our neighbour; we must do him every good.

While thus I delineate before you the portrait of active piety, I mean not to diminish your esteem for the various exercises of devotion, which may appear immediately connected with the general good: such as retirement, prayer, fasting, meditation, frequenting the sacraments, &c. Heaven forbid you should ever neglect to discharge these duties, which the law of Jesus enjoins, and to which Charity gives a value and a dignity! Lament your offences at the feet of the Minister of God, and guard against them in your future conduct; seek at our altars in the mystery of love,

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a continual renewal of your fervour; let fasting be joined to your works of mercy, that your soul, which is ever exposed to temptations, may be strengthened by divine grace, and purified from its stains. Such exercises are precious in the sight of God.

Nor are they deceived who attribute to the humble supplications of God's servants the success of enterprises, and the prosperity of States. *Thy hand, O God, said Holy David, destroyed the Gentiles—for they (the children of Israel) got not possession of the land by their own sword: neither did their own arm save them. But thy right hand, and thy arm, and the light of thy countenance: because thou was pleased with them (Ps. xliii.)*

Let then the chaste virgins and holy solitaries, of whom the world is not worthy, raise up their hands, without ceasing, to the throne of mercies. Let them restore to society, by the fervour of their prayers, that portion of light and strength, of which their fondness for so-

litude seems to deprive it. They watch over the safety of nations, when they rise, before the morning's dawn, to appease the wrath, and conciliate the favour of that Almighty Lord who formeth the combatant for the field; who sendeth forth terror, devastation and death, to destroy the enemies of his people. *Except the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it.* (Pf. cxxvi.)

○ *There are diversities of operations, but the same God who worketh all in all;* (1 Cor. xii.) and the situation, in which every circumstance being duly weighed, we are capable of doing the most good, is the situation to which Providence hath called us; but none can be justified in forming a plan of conduct, which has no tendency to the general good. You, my brethren, whom Providence hath placed in the various departments of active life, you are not to imagine, that being totally indifferent about temporal things; and aspiring only after those which are eternal, you are to suffer your
hands

hands to hang indolent and motionless, and your hearts to be actuated by no desires for the good and prosperity of your fellow-citizens. Jesus Christ, who condemns those treasures which injustice heaps up, condemns also that indigence which is the fruit of sloth. The Gospel applauds the industrious labourer, who makes the talent which he has received, fructify in his hands. The weight of God's indignation falls on the wretch, whose sluggish indolence makes his talent useless to himself and others. The solicitude of a Christian about the things of this world, is calm, tranquil, and resigned; but his confidence in Divine Providence is accompanied with all the efforts of industry: he prays, as if he expected all from the hand of God; but he labours as if he confided only in his own endeavours: he despises those riches which are made the fuel of inordinate passions; but esteems that affluence, which charity employs to gladden the hearts of the wretched. Let then, my
be-

beloved friends, let your active and spirited exertions, your honest industry, contribute to public happiness: then, the laws of the Gospel acting in concert with the dictates of human prudence, the empires of the earth will be an image of God's eternal kingdom; and present happiness will be the prelude to happiness everlasting.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE
EPIPHANY.On Purity of Intention.

*All whatsoever ye do in word or in work;
all things do ye in the name of the Lord
Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and
the Father by him. Colos. iii. 17.*

WHEN the Apostle enjoins us to do all things, whatsoever we do in the name of the Lord Jesus, without doubt he supposes that we totally abstain from every evil work. Indeed, to perform in the name of Jesus Christ any action which we know is of its own nature criminal, would be an absurdity beyond expression or conception, and a blasphemy added to the iniquity which is perpetrated.

trated. A known and deliberate violation of the law of God is an action so essentially evil, that no motive can excuse it; no intention, not even that of saving the whole creation from certain destruction, can ever convert it into a virtue.

The actions, therefore, of which St. Paul speaks, are, first, such as are of their own nature indifferent, such as may be good or evil, virtuous or vicious, in proportion as the end to which they are directed is innocent or criminal: and, secondly, such actions as are of their own nature pleasing in the sight of God; because these may be so perverted, by the end to which they are directed, as to be changed into vices.

Yes, my brethren, the best of all human actions, the most shining virtues, which attract the admiration of mankind, if the intention which gives birth to them be not pure and holy, are all so many sacrifices offered up at the shrine of inordinate self-love and self-gratification.—

The

The heart is what the Deity principally regards; the heart is the main spring of our lives and actions; the heart is the soil whence all that is good or evil shoots up: therefore, if the affections of the heart be not properly regulated, if they tend not towards their sovereign good, the fruits that grow there, however fair, specious, and beautiful their outward bloom, must within be rottenness and corruption. *The light of thy body is thine eye*, says our Divine Master, (Matt. vi.) *If thine eye be single*; that is, if it be ultimately fixed on that one Supreme Being, who is essentially wisdom, beauty, power, majesty, and infinite perfection; *thy whole body shall be lightsome*: the whole body of thy actions will be such as becomes those who are children of light. *But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome*; thy works will be works of darkness, destitute of every commendable qualification, and worthy of eternal punishment.

This

This purity of intention consists of our *seeking in the first place, the kingdom of God and his justice.* To preserve a pure intention, is to think, to speak, and to act, on all occasions, with a view to the honour and glory of God; to begin, to prosecute, and to terminate every action, in conformity and obedience to his adorable will.

We may with truth affirm, respecting all the moral precepts of the Christian Religion, that, although they are elevated above the reach of human reason, if unassisted by Revelation; yet, when revealed, they are found to be perfectly consonant to reason, and admirably adapted to the condition of man in his mortal state. I hope to make this particularly clear to you, with regard to the precept of doing all our works with a pure intention: for which purpose, I invite you this day to consider with me, in the first place, on what principles the obligation of complying with it is grounded; and we shall discover it to be
a debt

a debt of justice, which we owe to our Creator. In the second place, I mean to point out to you the advantages by which the observance of it must ever be attended.

I. The strict obligation incumbent on us, of performing every action with a view to promote the honour and glory of God, and in conformity with his blessed will, is founded on the absolute and supreme dominion which the Creator must possess over all his creatures. We belong entirely to God, by every title; by our creation, our preservation, our redemption: he, in the beginning, drew us out of nothing; from him we received this conscious life, this being, and all that appertains to our existence. The immortal spirit which animates these bodies of ours, descended from him; he bestowed upon us this reason, this judgment, this power of thinking and reflecting. The will, that noble faculty of the soul which calls all our other faculties into action; the heart and its affec-
tions,

tions, formed to love whatever is beautiful and amiable, is the production of his unspeakable goodness. The body, with all its senses, was fashioned by his hand. He expanded the heavens over our heads; created the sun to be to us a source of light and heat: he raises up the fruits of the earth for our nourishment. Every comfort we have ever tasted, all that we now enjoy in this world, or expect to enjoy in his heavenly dwelling, are blessings flowing from the inexhaustible Fountain of all good: each moment of our existence, his arm omnipotent supports us, that we fall not again into our ancient nothing: and, when lost to every grateful recollection, and abusing all his blessings, we had dared to sin against him, deserted his friendship, and forfeited every title to his protection; when we were enslaved under the tyranny of Death and Hell; he beheld our wretchedness with an eye of tender commiseration, and purchased us again for

for his own, with no less a price than the blood of his beloved son.

Since therefore God is the first beginning of all created beings, he must be their last end: all must tend to him to whom all belongs. Consequently, to make use of our senses and faculties for any purpose, beside the promoting of his honour; to seek merely the gratification of our own inclinations and passions; to act with a view to any object, however near and dear it may be to us, which is not pointed out by the decrees of his adorable will, is an injustice, a sacrilegious robbery: it is to endeavour to dispossess the Almighty of his dominion over the creation, to usurp his throne, and set up in his place the object in which our affections are centered. In speaking thus, I do not exaggerate; it is what all men virtually do, when the intention of their actions is not made subservient to the will of the Lord of all things visible and invisible.

I would

I would not be understood to assert, that as often as we act, we are indispensably obliged to think of God, and explicitly refer to him every work. In our present imperfect state, that is morally impossible. We have not an entire command over our own imaginations; they will wander from one object to another, and reason has not power sufficient to control them. The time will come, when we hope to be happily absorbed in the contemplation of the Deity; to have no thought, no will, but for him; to forget all things in him; or rather to see all in the clear light of his infinite wisdom: but, till that bright day arrive, a variety of distractions will crowd upon our minds, in opposition to all our endeavours, and steal away our attention, from time to time, to the objects which press upon our senses from every side.

Still, notwithstanding these unavoidable distractions and wanderings of the mind, we are indispensably obliged, in the

the disposition of our hearts, to refer all our actions to God: and therefore we are strictly bound to make use of the means necessary for constantly preserving this disposition of heart. Now the means which are evidently best calculated for this end, are to make frequent offerings of ourselves and of our actions to his divine majesty, particularly at the beginning and end of each day, and when we enter upon any new undertaking; frequently to cast ourselves at his feet, acknowledging our dependance on him, and confessing his absolute dominion over us and all things; and to beg of him, that he will vouchsafe so effectually to reign over us by his grace, as to be himself the grand object of all our aims and views. Above all, we never can be allowed deliberately to propose to ourselves any other object; never to act in such manner, as to make sensuality, vanity, pleasures, possessions, honours, or any earthly emolument or enjoyment, the main spring, or the ultimate motive,
of

of our actions: for it is ever true, and will be eternally true, that, as to God all things belong, to him alone shall be honour, glory, power, and dominion, for ever and ever.

To apply, therefore, this doctrine to the ordinary actions, which fill up the measure of each day of our existence on earth; when we arise in the morning, after taking that rest which is necessary for repairing the vigour of the body, after that sleep which, being the suspension of all our corporeal faculties, is the natural image of death; we ought to consider ourselves as just entering into life, as beginning a portion of time which is all to be employed in doing the will of our Creator: consequently, we must turn our first thoughts and affections towards him who watched over us during our slumber, with more than parental care; who stationed his hosts of angels round our bed; and in the arms of whose providence we have taken our repose. We must lay all our particular designs and intentions

tentions at his feet, and make him an offering of all that we are to perform that day, begging it may be directed solely and purely to him. We must then go to our work or employment, enter upon our business, whatever it be; because he, by placing us in our present circumstances in the department which we hold in society, has marked out the duties of it, as the proper exercise of the powers and faculties with which he has endowed us. We must take our meals for the necessary refreshment of nature, and for the preservation of our being, which we are commanded to preserve, till it please the sovereign Lord of Life and Death to put a final period to our earthly existence.

The same purity of intention should regulate our sleep, our recreations, our conversations, our visits, our dress, and every action, however in itself trifling and inconsiderable. That eternal Being, without whose all-ruling providence not a hair of our heads can fall to the ground,
sees

Teens us in every circumstance and situation, and, in every action, claims us for his own. If we converse together, it should always be with a view to keep up that mutual intercourse which God wills us to maintain with each other; since he formed us for society, and desires we should be closely united in brotherly love. Even the care we take to preserve the cleanliness of the body, and the decent appearance of the exterior, and to attend to the established forms of civility and politeness, should be influenced by the same principle. We should mind these things, in order to remove every thing offensive and disagreeable from before the eyes of our fellow-creatures, whom God commands us to cherish, to love, and respect, and whose very weaknesses we are to pass over and indulge.

But, unhappily, it is too true, that a small degree of attention to what passes in the world will be more than sufficient to convince us, that it is not on these prin-

principles men generally act: no; they go out in the morning to attend to the concerns, or taste the comforts of life, often without even a passing reflection on the Author of all their good: they take their meal, not merely for the support of nature, not as a remedy for corporeal weakness, but for the gratification of a sensual appetite. If this be not their leading object, whence that delicacy in the choice of their food, and excess in the use of it, from which nature is averse, and which defeat the very purposes of nourishment, by impairing that health which our food was designed to preserve? Their conversation with each other is not an intercourse of charity and mutual benevolence, but is made a vehicle of scandal and detraction; or, at best, is kept up only to kill that time which lies heavy on their hands. Men labour and toil from morning till night in the occupations of their state of life; but, do they labour to do the will of God, or merely to satisfy their own desires, in the acqui-

tion of the comforts and conveniencies
 of life? If they labour for God, whence
 comes it that for so many hours and days,
 nay, in the whole course of their employ-
 ments, he is hardly ever thought of?
 Can they labour to please him, and yet
 give him no place in their remembrance?
 Again, if they seek to do the will of God,
 how comes it that the nourishing of the
 soul, by the meditation of heavenly
 truths, by prayer, by frequent participa-
 tion of the sacraments, the channels of
 divine grace—how comes it, that the
 decorating of the mind with the beauti-
 ful ornaments of virtue, exercises which
 they know to be most pleasing in the
 sight of God, are ever postponed, when
 they stand in competition with any world-
 ly occupation which promises a sordid
 gain, a trifling earthly emolument? If it
 be for God that they labour, why then
 are the superfluous fruits of their labour,
 their industry or commerce, made the
 fuel of sensuality or vanity, instead of
 being distributed for the consolation and
 support

support of their distressed fellow-members in Christ Jesus?

Ah! my Christian friends, men seek themselves, not only in their ordinary occupations, but frequently even in those actions which are considered as virtues. They come to the temple of God, apparently, to pay their homage to his Divine Majesty; and, behold! even while the Lamb of God is immolated on our altars, and angels stand trembling round, they, worms of the earth, place themselves in the most conspicuous situations, that they may draw attention to their beauty, their dress, or some such contemptible distinctions: they come to hear the word of God, the oracles of eternal wisdom, prompted chiefly by an idle curiosity, or a wish to be pleased with the flowers of oratory, and the graces of diction; and so evidently do they manifest this to be their leading object, that, alas! the Preachers of the Gospel are strongly tempted to close in with the corruption of their hearers, and frequently study

more to give them pleasure, and obtain their applause, than to bring them to a sense of the distressed condition of their souls. Great God! eternal source of every excellence, thou, indeed, art little regarded! I tremble for you, my brethren, and I tremble for myself, unless from this moment we divest ourselves of every other intention, but that of performing the Divine will.

Remember that, in spite of our corruption, the will of God must be done; his name must and will be glorified; he made all things for his own glory; and, being omnipotent, none shall resist him and succeed. But he hath given to us a free will, a power of choosing for ourselves; and he wishes us to make him a voluntary sacrifice of that glory, of which none can deprive him. If we refuse this, he will still be honoured: his justice will shine forth, no less glorious to him, in our eternal destruction, than his mercy in our everlasting felicity. But if we freely give to him that which is
his

his, then will the light of his countenance shine upon us; then shall we meet with every tender effusion of his love and bounty. If glory be given to God in the highest, then peace, a true, solid, everlasting peace, must be the portion allotted to men of good-will.—And this brings me to the consideration of some of the advantages which are derived from purity of intention.

II. By a pure intention, all our actions are dignified and ennobled. It would be mean, it would be pitiful, far beneath the dignity of our immortal souls, to employ their excellent faculties in the mere pursuit of earthly satisfactions; in catching at the uncertain breath of human applause; in amassing perishable riches; in indulging groveling pleasures. We were made for far more noble purposes: our mind was formed for the contemplation of infinite wisdom; our affections were enkindled in our hearts, that they might ever tend upwards to an union with the source of all beauty and excellence.

lence. These are the proper and distinguishing employments of immortal beings; and these are attended to by purity of intention: it unites us to the society of the celestial spirits, who are ever absorbed in God, and ravished with his inexpressible perfections: it begins that work, which we hope will be our occupation for eternity, in the company of all that is wise, great, good, and happy.

The same purity of intention stamps a merit and a value upon every, even the most insignificant actions of our lives: by it, each moment of time may be made the purchase of a new degree of glory in the kingdom of Christ. The works of men, who act for the gratification of vanity, or merely with a view to any thing temporal, will pass away together with their mortal lives, or subsist only to the increase of their confusion and distress in a future life: but works directed to the glory of our Creator, though done in time, shall subsist when time is no more, and be recorded in the book of
life

life with characters that shall never be effaced. Alas! how many men labour and fatigue themselves, day after day, in the closest application to the duties of their calling, and with all their industry and care do nothing, because they do nothing for God and eternity? The Royal Prophet compares them to men in a dream, who seem to themselves to lay deep designs, to transact much business, to do great things, because they are in great agitation; and when they awake, they discover that all was a flattering illusion. *They have slept their sleep, and, have found nothing in their hands.* (Ps. lxxv.)

Oh! do not suffer your actions thus to vanish away like a shadow, and leave you destitute of all comfort and support, in the awful hour of dissolution, when you will most need consolation. You especially, whose circumstances oblige you to a constant round of trouble and labour for gaining a necessary subsistence to yourselves and your families, do not suffer all this labour to be lost, when you

have it in your power to reap the fruits of it for ever in immortal bliss.

Besides, my brethren, how sweet it must be to labour, with a conviction that we are working under the eye of a loving and tender master, who cannot forget our services, nor disregard our endeavours; but, who, when the great day of retribution shall arrive, will compensate our labours beyond all our possible wishes or conceptions! How delightful too is the reflection, that we are sure our endeavours and designs can never be disappointed! The man who purely seeks to do the will of God, knows not, properly speaking, what a cross or misfortune is. The designs he forms may be frustrated: his labour, instead of producing the fruits which it promised, may terminate in sickness, in poverty and affliction; still he is not disconcerted: he did not act principally for those fruits and advantages; he acted to please God; and whatever be the event of his actions, which is not at his disposal, he has pleased God—

God—he has done the will of God. That thought dispels from his mind every cloud of uneasiness and dejection. Such a man is happy, my brethren, as far as happiness is compatible with this imperfect state: joy and serenity gild his days: his life is a perpetual sunshine of content and peace; and, at the close of it he can look forward into eternity, without dismay, confident that, as he has lived for God, he dies for God also, and that his departing spirit will be carried to the bosom of Abraham, the abode of true and everlasting felicity.

S E R M O N XIII.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE
EPIPHANY.

On the Beginnings and Progress of the Operations of Divine Grace on the Souls of Men.

The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-feed, which a man took and sowed in his field : which indeed is the least of all feeds ; but when it is grown up, it is greater than any herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof. Mat. xiii. 31.

THIS parable of the grain of mustard-feed, which the Church has pointed out to her children as the particular subject of their consideration on this Sunday, gives us a familiar, but just image of the

the circumstances which attend the foundation and propagation of the kingdom of God; whether by that kingdom be understood the multitude of the disciples of Jesus, united together in one visible society upon earth; or the kingdom of Divine grace, which the Almighty establishes in the hearts of those who cooperate with his bounty, and yield themselves up to his dominion.

To either of these kingdoms the parable may justly be applied. It is admirably descriptive of the humble origin and subsequent progress of the Church of Christ from its first establishment, till it extended its power over the most enlightened nations of the earth. The religion of Jesus was in the beginning *truly like a grain of mustard-seed*: it appeared small, mean, and contemptible, to the judgement of human wisdom, and in the eyes of the great ones of the earth. A few poor, vulgar, illiterate fishermen, destitute of almost every qualification that could make them respectable to

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mankind,

mankind, undertook to persuade the whole world to embrace doctrines directly opposite to every received opinion among men. Never did undertaking appear more ill-concerted, or, according to all the laws of human probability, less likely to succeed ; and yet, never was undertaking crowned with more glorious success. The small and almost imperceptible seed, which the Apostles scattered over the land, fostered by the special care and protection of heaven, quickly grew up into a large and stately tree, ; so that the princes and nations of the earth were proud to dwell in its branches, to be nourished by its fruits, and repose under its shade.

But, having thus applied the parable, in a few words, to the visible kingdom of Christ, I shall in this discourse consider, in what manner it is applicable to the kingdom of Divine grace, in the souls of men. Indeed the empire which the Almighty establishes by his grace in the hearts of his faithful servants, is intimately

intimately connected with the establishment of his visible church; since one part, and the most essential, the most noble and excellent portion of this church, are those souls in whom God reigns and whom he governs, and holds in perfect obedience to his holy will: nor will it any way profit us to have been exteriorly united to the society of God's elect, unless we be of their happy number: if separated from them, alas! it would have been better for us never to have known Christ Jesus.

That you may observe, therefore, by what means Divine grace generally takes possession of the souls of men; that you may know the time of your visitation, and be excited to lay hold on the proffered bounties of your Redeemer; applying the parable of this day's Gospel, to the kingdom of heaven in the soul of a Christian, I will show you, first, from what small beginnings the operations of the grace of Jesus on the human heart are gradually increased, till
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the whole man become subjected to its dominion: secondly, of what importance to our future happiness it must consequently be, to cherish the first impressions of grace, by a faithful correspondence with them on our parts: The subject must prove instructive and beneficial, if it meet with a serious and becoming attention.

The Almighty could, if he pleased, by darting only one ray of celestial wisdom upon the soul of a sinner, enlighten, strike, subdue, and triumph over his heart. By one stroke of mercy, he could crush the most ungovernable and furious passions; break the force of the most inveterate habits; soften the hardest hearts into tears of compunction; and change the most perverse and abandoned of sinners into great and eminent saints. *The voice of the Lord is in power.... The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars: yea, the Lord shall break the cedars of Libanus. (Ps. xxviii.)* He can, in one instant, dash to the ground all the towering pride
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of the human heart, and hold it in chains at his feet. He can do this, my brethren, he has done it. The heart of man is in his hands; he disposes of it according to his pleasure; and none shall resist his will.

But this is not the ordinary conduct of his Providence. He does not usually bear down all opposition from our passions, by a torrent of powerful graces, and almost irresistible impressions: but he chooses rather to advance gradually in his operations on the human heart, and to continue and increase them in proportion to the care we take in corresponding with what he has already done. At first, a fainter light is diffused over the sinner's mind, which, though seemingly unequal to the dispelling of those clouds of error and passion with which it enters into contest, becomes progressively more and more bright. Hence the similitude of the grain of mustard-seed, which, being almost imperceptible when sown, shoots up by degrees

degrees into a comely tree, accurately expresses the beginnings, the progress, and final perfection of virtue in the servants of God. The seeds of virtue, which are sown in the heart by his Divine Spirit, at first are so small, that, without much attention on our part, they may be scarcely perceived; but, if carefully preserved and fostered by a due exertion of our own powers, they quickly spring up, and continue to spread themselves over the whole body of our actions, till, some new perfection daily budding forth and contributing to the ornament and happiness of our being, we grow up *unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ.*

This conduct of divine Providence in the distribution of super-natural graces to mankind, is suited to our natural condition and exigencies. God co-operates with all his creatures, in a manner proportioned to the powers and faculties with which he hath endowed their being.

The inanimate creation he compels to act according to determined laws, but,
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as man is by nature a free-agent, possessed of a self-determining principle, a principle of merit, it is but just that he use his liberty in co-operating with the Divine power and goodness, for the attainment of his own felicity ; therefore it is so ordained, that our correspondence with the first grace we receive, shall prepare the way for another, and more powerful grace ; and so on, till our corrupt passions be entirely subdued, and we *put on the new man, who, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth.*

One of the most general means which the Almighty makes use of for drawing men to his service, is that uneasiness and pain, which torments the sinner after every violation of the divine law ; that anguish of heart, which empoisons the enjoyment he expected from his transgression. This interior anguish is called remorse of conscience, and is excited in every heart by the goodness of a God solicitous to promote our interests and hap-

happinefs. The cries of a wounded conscience are heard by all the people of the earth; by the rudeft and moft barbarous tribes of men, and by the moft polite and cultivated nations. Remorfe of conscience follows the voluptuous man to his fcenes of gaiety and joy, and embitters thofe draughts of pleafure which he takes off with fo much apparent delight: it afcends with the ambitious to the height of his honours; and though multitudes bend before him, and with fulfome adulation proclaim and extol his greatness, conscience reproaches him with the basenefs of his heart, and humbles him in his own eyes, as low as the meaneft of mortals. The pretended infidel, who with exulting infolence affects in public to defpife religion, and laughs at all that is held moft facred, feels, when in retirement, and no longer fupported by his vanity, the fharpeft flings of remorfe: there his conscience haunts him like a horrid fpectre; and he trembles and turns pale at every found
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he hears, from the apprehension that it may bring with it some avenging judgment from that eternal Being, whom he injures and blasphemes. This warning voice from heaven, which speaks in the heart of every sinner, will, if listened to with serious attention, be quickly followed by other graces: whereas, if in the beginning he slight or disregard it; if he seek by dissipation to rid himself of its importunity, or drown its cries in jolity, merriment and riot; he may at length render his heart so obdurate, as scarcely to feel any of the anguish which conscience should create, and so darken his understanding, that even a momentary gleam of truth will hardly ever again break in upon his mind.

Frequently also the first graces of heaven, by which the sinner is visited, come to him disguised under the form of worldly afflictions, crosses, and misfortunes. It often happens, for example, that a man engaged in carrying on a profitable business or commerce, becomes,
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in the full career of success, so wholly immersed in earthly concerns, so wedded to temporal interests, as to forget that he has not here a permanent dwelling-place, to lose sight of the good things of eternity, and confine his views and hopes within the narrow circle of this mortal life. At length, however, by an unlooked-for concurrence of untoward circumstances, his affairs wear a more unpleasant aspect; his trade by degrees is turned into another channel; losses and misfortunes succeed each other, and in the end involve him in ruin. His condition appears lamentable: but the day may shortly arrive when he will clearly discover, that these misfortunes were the greatest blessings he could have prayed for in his warmest wishes for his own happiness; when he will kiss the iron rod which chastised him, and bless the mercies of that God who kindly, though violently, tore from his enjoyment those objects which he would otherwise have loved to his eternal perdition.

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In like manner, a severe fit of sickness, that undermines that strength and vigour which is prostituted to unworthy and criminal purposes, removes us from the occasions of sin, disfigures that perishable beauty which alone is idolized, destroys those charms which are displayed in a mode so fatal to the innocence of others; or the death of an intimate friend whom we sought to oblige and gratify at the expence of conscience and virtue: these, and a thousand such accidents, which men deem misfortunes, are so many calls from the Divine mercy, that invites us to break, and even breaks for us those criminal chains which bind us down to the earth, at a lamentable distance from our last end, our sovereign good, and true happiness.

Many other are the methods by which the Almighty communicates his first graces: to enumerate them all is not necessary, and would not indeed be possible. He even makes every thing we
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behold a silent exhortation to repentance and goodness. When we behold a funeral procession pass before us, the image of death inspires a stillness of thought, a remembrance and dread of dissolution, and warns us to labour to secure for ourselves a prosperous passage from time to eternity. The rapid successions of mornings and evenings remind us continually, that we are hastening on towards that last day of our lives, which for us begins eternity; that awful moment, when only virtue can support and console our trembling hopes. Every good action we see others perform, attracts our esteem, and invites us to an imitation of it; every pious book we look into, every exhortation to virtue which is addressed to us, is employed by our Redeemer as an instrument to draw us to his love. Do not imagine that these things are the effect of chance: no; that Providence which extends from one limit of the creation to the other, disposes all things with

with sweetness and power, to compel us, as far as is consistent with the nature of free agents, to enter on that virtuous course which terminates in true felicity.

His mercies have this day assembled us here together, that contemplating the operations of his graces, and seeing the infinite importance of attending to his first good motions and inspirations, we might be admonished so to treasure up the small, and almost imperceptible dews which fall from heaven upon our souls, that they may become a fountain springing up unto life everlasting.

III. My brethren, these softening dews have frequently descended on your souls: the seeds of grace have been sown in your hearts: you have often found yourselves interiorly excited to quit the ways of iniquity and destruction, to labour to subdue your vicious inclinations, and to walk hereafter in newness of life. But have you yet cherished these first impressions? Have you suffered these
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good seeds to sink deep into your souls, and take root there? Hitherto, perhaps, continual dissipation has carried off your mind from any the least attention to them: perhaps, the cares and solitudes of the world have choaked them up, and prevented them from spreading in your hearts. Perhaps, eager in the pursuit of sensual pleasures, you have found no leisure to observe what passes within yourselves. Oh! Christian brother, think what you are doing. Whither are you hurried by inconsiderate levity, or impetuous passion? You are converting those graces which Jesus purchased for you with his precious blood, those graces which flow from the boundless ocean of his mercy and love, into so many occasions of new crimes; you are making them the instruments of your eternal ruin.

It was this base ingratitude, this shameful abuse of God's favours, that brought perdition on the Jewish people, and caused

caused your Redeemer to shed tears over the miserable fate of Jerusalem, once the favourite city of God, but now doomed to destruction, for want of correspondence with his graces. Ah! my beloved, your Saviour sheds those pitying tears over every soul, which like Jerusalem, was formed to be the dwelling-place of the Most High, and yet refuses to receive him. Methinks I hear him tenderly expostulate with you, as he once did with that devoted city: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not! Behold, your house shall be left to you desolate. (Mat. xxiii.) If thou hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace—but now they are hidden from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and*

beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee; and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation.—

(Luke xix.) Yes, Christian soul, if thou hadst known in *thy day*, when grace and mercy were offered thee, the things that are for thy peace; if thou hadst not proved insensible to all my goodness, while I sought to give thee true peace, unalterable content and repose; thy happiness had indeed been secured. But now the days shall come upon thee, days no longer smiling with sweetness and love; but days of calamity and misery. Every evil shall rush in together upon thee, *because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation.*

Do not flatter yourselves, my brethren, that, if you now refuse to co-operate with the graces of God, they will be hereafter at your disposal, whenever you may wish to have recourse to them. Consider, for a moment, what it is you are trusting to. You expect that future time will be allowed you, in which
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you may atone for your offences, and work out your salvation. And from whom must you expect it? From that Being who has given you all the time you so ungratefully abuse; who has preserved your life till this moment, that you might employ it in sanctifying your souls, while you have spent it in adding daily to the multitude of your iniquities. Yet you expect, that this God, to whom you daily offer new injuries, whom you are resolved to continue to insult, as long as it may suit the gratification of your corrupt inclinations—you expect, that notwithstanding you each moment provoke him to break the thread of your life, which he holds in his hand, and suffer you to fall into the abyss of perdition, which is open to receive you; you expect he will still preserve your life, will grant you still more time to deride his mercies, and then time for repentance. Great God! was ever hope so glaringly absurd! Surely, every spark of reason must be extinguished in that mind, which

can build on such presumptuous and mad expectations.

But, put the case that your life be prolonged. Certainly the more you accumulate your crimes, the greater grace you stand in need of for your conversion, while you are more and more unworthy of it. A miracle of Divine grace is requisite for changing the heart of an habitual sinner: and you make yourselves unworthy of the least of those graces which God can bestow. Still, you expect this powerful grace; and the expectation gives you security. Presumptuous wretch! do you think then that God will be thus derided and mocked? Have you forgotten the terrible reply which he made to the Pharisees? *I go my way, said he, and you shall seek me, and you shall die in your sin. Whither I go, you cannot come.* (Jo. viii.) Oh! is there one sinner that flights the graces of Jesus, who has a right to expect a treatment more merciful? Is there one that has not every reason to dread, that, in
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the hour of tribulation, when he shall seek Jesus, the Lord will turn a deaf ear to his cries, and suffer him to die in his sins? Far be it from me to preach a doctrine capable of driving men to despair of God's mercies! I know, his mercies are unbounded; but I know, and I would have the sinner be thoroughly sensible, that his justice is infinite likewise. I know that this sentence of St. Paul is as true as it should be dreadful to those who receive graces in vain: *The earth, says this inspired Apostle, that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for those by whom it is tilled, receiveth blessing from God: but that which bringeth forth thorns and briars is rejected, and very near to a curse whose end is to be burnt.*

But, continues the Apostle, my dearly beloved, we trust better things of you, and nearer to salvation, though we thus speak. And we desire that you become not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and
patience

patience shall inherit the promises. (Heb. vi.) Rise therefore now, without longer delay, and obey the calls of heaven: imitate the conduct of St. Matthew, whom Jesus passing along saw sitting in the custom-house, and said to him, *follow me.* (Mat. ix.) If this man had reasoned with himself agreeably to the maxims of worldly prudence: if he had said within himself, How can I think of sacrificing a situation in which I gain a comfortable subsistence, that I may follow this call of Jesus, in whom virtue appears attended by nothing but poverty and humiliation? At least, I must first lay up a competence; and then I can listen to this invitation:—had he reasoned thus, perhaps the light of Divine grace would no more have shone so fully on his mind. Jesus was *passing by*, and perhaps would pass that way no more: but, happily for St. Matthew, he was not so foolish as to let slip the present occasion; *he rose up and followed him*: and this ready obedience to the first invitation of his Saviour

viour was rewarded with more abundant graces. You know what followed: he became an illustrious Apostle, a firm pillar of the Church of Christ, a glorious Saint, and ended a life filled with virtues and merits, by giving himself up a martyred victim to divine love.

Behold then, now my brethren, after we have been so often called, Jesus again passes by: he invites us this day to follow him. Come, then, we will hasten to obey his voice; and cherishing the grace which he now imparts to us, we shall happily experience in ourselves how aptly its effects are represented, as well by the other properties of the grain of mustard-seed, as by the smallness of its size.

We shall experience its power in drawing tears of contrition from our eyes; in warming our affections for heavenly things; in giving us a relish and an appetite for virtue, a hunger and thirst after justice. We shall see it gradually spread itself over all our thoughts, actions, and words, and become *like a tree which is planted*

*planted near the running waters, which shall
bring forth its fruit in due season; a tree
laden with the fruits of justice and
sanctity, watered here with the dews from
above, and then transplanted in the hea-
venly Paradise, where its leaf shall not
fall off, and it shall flourish throughout
eternity.*

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END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

28 JY 58